

**Asking women about having children:  
Interaction in telephone-survey interviews**

**Marian B. May**

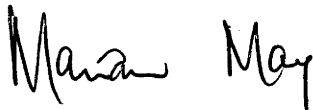


**THE  
AUSTRALIAN  
NATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of  
The Australian National University  
March, 2002**

## **Declaration**

**This thesis is my original work as a Research Scholar in the  
Demography and Sociology Program of the Research School of Social  
Sciences, The Australian National University,  
June 1997 to March 2002.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Marian May". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Marian May**



*For Mary, my mother, and John, my father,  
for showing me the value of learning  
for saving to send me to university  
for always encouraging my endeavours.*

## Acknowledgments

---

Thanks are due to many, many people. It is impossible to remember and acknowledge the times when a comment, a smile or a word of encouragement helped me to take the next step. Thanking each individual in the way that I would like is beyond the capability of the word processor and the printed page. Thank you all.

To the Australian National University for awarding me the opportunity to undertake this study. The Women's Re-entry Scholarship allowed me to 're-enter'—in fact it allowed me to continue keep a foot in several camps, to add another job to the ones that are not always as negotiable in life—being a worker and a mother. It has been a gift of great value.

To Peter McDonald for the opportunity to work on *Negotiating the Life Course* survey data and for supporting in many ways my endeavour to tackle an area unfamiliar in demographic territory.

To the members of my supervisory panel: Terry Hull, Tony Liddicoat, David Lucas, and Geoff McNicoll for great perseverance in coming to terms with the 'other'—Terry, David and Geoff with 'squiggles' in my draft chapters and Tony with demographers' distance from their data, for the insight of your comments and suggestions.

Thanks to my colleagues and fellow students in the Department of Demography and Sociology in the Research School of Social Sciences for cheerful company and encouragement.

Many people helped me at various times to collect and process my interview data. Thanks to Eva Mills, Lixia Qu, and Ruth Weston at the Australian Institute of Family Studies; University of Queensland CATI; Bob Boag for assisting with digitising data and improving sound quality; Karen Ewens and Diana Crow for computing and technical assistance.

Thanks to all those who responded to my requests for articles and resources unavailable at the ANU and who generously offered further assistance: Rod Gardner, Phillip Glenn,

Hanneke Houtkoop-Steenstra, Alec McHoul, Robert Moore, Johannes Smit, Sandra Smith, Hanne-Pernille Stax, Brigid van Wanrooy, Johannes Wagner.

To the members of my PhD groups: without your close and critical scrutiny of my drafts, strong support, encouragement, and coffee appreciation I doubt that I would have finished. Thanks to Simon Baker, Connie Gultiano, Tanjina Mirza, and Thomas Schindlmayr—the pioneer group. Particular thanks to Simon, lap-swimming companion and long-distance draft-reader to the bitter end. My second group—Ann Evans, Edith Gray, Rebecca Kippen and Rosangela Merlo, readers and whip-crackers *par excellence*—have sharpened my connection with the methods of demography, providing technical assistance, friendship and tiramisu that I will not forget. The Discourse Group in the School of Language Studies—in particular, Nicky Bramley, Belinda Collins, Tony Liddicoat, Maurice Nevile, and Johanna Rendle-Short—welcomed with patience and humour my early efforts at analysis of talk-in-interaction. Thank you for introducing me to the collaborative approach of conversation analysis data sessions.

To the many people who graciously read my drafts: my valuable panel members, my fellow PhD students, former PhD group members, Wendy Cosford, Michael Hess, and Peter McDonald.

To my wonderful sister, Hilary, and my healing team of doctors, nurses and complementary healers and therapists—Angela, Anne, Bill, Corinne, Di, Douglas, Don, Donna and John, Eleanor, Heather, and Kim. Thank you for my life.

To the children in my life Meg, Ryan and Erin; Freddy and Matthew; Jonathan and Kieran: thanks for understanding my absence in body and mind.

To Michael Hess: thanks for your partnership, love, support and so much more (the chicken vegetable soup recipe has achieved perfection).

Finally, to the women in this study: Annegret, Lyn, Chrissy, Andrea, Tonia, Kristen, Sonya, Dale, Jess, Joanne, Ricky, Tina, Marilyn, Noelle, Carol, Melinda, Edith, Coral, Karen, Liz, Nadia, Helen, Jenny, Kerry, Beverly, Lindy, Debra. Your voices, laughter and stories remain with me.

# Table of contents

Acknowledgments.....	iv
Table of contents.....	vi
List of tables .....	ix
Abstract .....	x
<b>Ch. 1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Surveys in demographic research.....	1
1.2 Language and interaction in social science research.....	10
1.3 Conversation Analysis (CA), institutional talk, and standardised survey interviews.....	15
1.3.1 CA and institutional talk .....	19
1.3.2 CA and standardised survey interviews .....	20
1.4 The context and objectives of this research .....	24
<b>Ch. 2 Sources of interview data and approaches to analysis.....</b>	<b>26</b>
2.1 Sources of interview data.....	26
2.1.1 NLC Survey data.....	26
2.1.2 WOC Survey data .....	29
2.2 Methodological considerations in choice and use of data sources and selection of respondents .....	38
2.3 Analysis of interview data .....	41
2.3.1 Transcription of interview data .....	41
2.3.2 Issues in transcription of the WOC interviews.....	44
2.3.3 CA and use of WOC interview data.....	51
<b>Ch. 3 Interaction in standardised survey interviews .....</b>	<b>53</b>
3.1 Turn-taking organisation in standardised interviews.....	54
3.1.1 Continuers and acknowledgment tokens.....	63
3.1.2 Rush-throughs .....	65
3.2 Sequence organisation in standardised survey interviews.....	66
3.2.1 Sequence-closing thirds (SCTs).....	67
3.2.2 Assessments .....	69
3.2.3 Formulations .....	71
3.2.4 Pauses, gaps and lapses.....	75
3.2.5 Expanded question-answer sequences.....	77
3.2.6 The concept of preference and dispreferred responses .....	79
3.3 The organisation of repair.....	83
3.4 Construction and design of turns.....	87
3.4.1 The notion of recipient design .....	88
3.4.2 Affiliation.....	89
3.4.3 Frames.....	94
3.5 Summary.....	96

<b>Ch. 4 Questions and responses in the Women on Children interviews .....</b>	<b>98</b>
4.1 <i>The WOC questions .....</i>	<i>100</i>
4.1.1 Question 20.....	100
4.1.2 Question 154.....	107
4.1.3 Question 155.....	111
4.1.4 Question 159.....	115
4.1.5 Question 160.....	117
4.1.6 Question 164.....	120
4.1.7 Question 165.....	125
4.1.8 Question 166.....	131
4.1.9 Question 167.....	136
4.1.10 Question 168.....	140
4.1.11 Question 193 and 194 .....	143
4.2 <i>Discussion.....</i>	<i>146</i>
<b>Ch. 5 Negotiating likelihood.....</b>	<b>149</b>
5.1 <i>Concept of likelihood.....</i>	<i>150</i>
5.2 <i>Negotiating the Life Course (NLC) and Women on Children (WOC) Survey questions on likelihood .....</i>	<i>152</i>
5.3 <i>The WOC questions and responses.....</i>	<i>154</i>
5.3.1 Q164 Are you currently pregnant?.....	154
5.3.2 Q165 How likely are you to have a child in the future, VERY LIKELY, LIKELY, NOT SURE, UNLIKELY, MOST UNLIKELY or DEFINITELY NOT?.....	157
5.4 <i>Discussion.....</i>	<i>180</i>
5.5 <i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>183</i>
<b>Ch. 6 Determining the timing of a first child.....</b>	<b>186</b>
6.1 <i>Questions on timing of first birth.....</i>	<i>188</i>
6.2 <i>NLC and WOC Q167 on the determinants of timing of first pregnancy or birth.....</i>	<i>190</i>
6.3 <i>The responses to NLC and WOC Q167 .....</i>	<i>192</i>
6.3.1 WOC Survey respondents.....	195
6.3.2 Comparison between Wave 1 NLC and WOC Survey .....	195
6.4 <i>The interaction on WOC Q167 .....</i>	<i>197</i>
6.4.1 WOC respondents born after 1950.....	198
6.4.2 WOC respondents born in or before 1950 .....	222
6.5 <i>Frequency of the combination of response options (04) and (05), and response options (13) and (15) .....</i>	<i>236</i>
6.6 <i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>239</i>
<b>Ch. 7 Valuing children.....</b>	<b>245</b>
7.1 <i>Attitudes and values .....</i>	<i>246</i>
7.2 <i>Measuring attitudes .....</i>	<i>248</i>
7.3 <i>Writing good attitude statements .....</i>	<i>251</i>
7.4 <i>Questions on valuing children .....</i>	<i>253</i>
7.5 <i>NLC and WOC Questions 193 and 194 on valuing children .....</i>	<i>254</i>

7.6	<i>Responses to Question 194</i> .....	255
7.7	<i>Interaction on WOC Question 194</i> .....	257
7.7.1	Statement 1: A life without children is not fully complete .....	260
7.7.2	Statements 2 and 3: Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother; Children have too much impact on the freedom of the father.....	269
7.7.3	Statement 4: Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy.....	286
7.7.4	Statement 5: It is better not to have children because they are such a burden .....	294
7.7.5	Statement 6: A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.....	297
7.7.6	Statement 7: Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother.....	303
7.8	<i>Implications</i> .....	308
<b>Ch. 8</b>	<b>Implications for demographic survey research.....</b>	<b>313</b>
8.1	<i>Interaction in interviews</i> .....	314
8.2	<i>Surveys as a way of ascertaining women's views and experience</i> .....	317
8.3.1	Demographic concepts and issues in questions.....	321
8.3.2	Field-coded questions .....	324
8.3.3	Attitude questions .....	325
8.4	<i>Pre-testing, pilot testing, and monitoring</i> .....	327
8.5	<i>Interviewer training</i> .....	328
8.6	<i>Cost and duration</i> .....	329
8.7	<i>Implications for multilingual surveys</i> .....	330
8.8	<i>Implications for qualitative methods</i> .....	331
8.9	<i>Implications for research</i> .....	333
<b>References</b> .....		<b>335</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>Pre-call checklist, <i>Women on Children Survey</i> .....</b>	<b>370</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>Interview schedule, <i>Women on Children Survey</i> .....</b>	<b>371</b>
<b>Appendix 3</b>	<b>Transcription symbols.....</b>	<b>375</b>

## List of tables

---

<b>Table 2.1</b>	<b>Sources of data, interviewer and respondent details for this research.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Table 2.2</b>	<b>Characteristics of WOC Survey sample, 1998 .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Table 4.1</b>	<b>Respondent's relationship status, 1998 .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Table 4.2</b>	<b>Number of children respondents had ever had, 1998 .....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Table 4.3</b>	<b>Children from previous relationship of respondent's partner, 1998.....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Table 4.4</b>	<b>Respondent's pregnancy status at the time of the survey, 1998.....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Table 4.5</b>	<b>Respondent's likelihood of having a child in the future, 1998 .....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Table 4.6</b>	<b>Respondent's reasons for being unlikely to have a child in the future, 1998.....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Table 4.7</b>	<b>WOC Survey Q166 'other' responses .....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Table 4.8</b>	<b>Factors determining respondent's timing of first birth, future first birth, or this pregnancy, 1998 .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Table 4.9</b>	<b>Number of children respondent thinks she will have in the future .....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Table 4.10</b>	<b>Responses to Q194 .....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Table 5.1</b>	<b>Responses to Q165 .....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Table 6.1</b>	<b>Reasons recorded as determining timing of respondent's first birth, same respondents, NLC 1997 and WOC 1998.....</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>Table 6.2</b>	<b>Responses to Q167, NLC 1997 and WOC 1998.....</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Table 6.3</b>	<b>Year of birth, year of first marriage and age at first birth, WOC respondents born after 1950 .....</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>Table 6.4</b>	<b>Year of birth, year of first marriage and age at first birth, WOC respondents born in or before 1950.....</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>Table 7.1</b>	<b>Responses to Question 194 of 27 WOC respondents, NLC Wave 1, 1996-7 and WOC Survey, 1998.....</b>	<b>257</b>

Surveys are the main way in which demographers collect data on one of demography's major concerns—women and what they do and think about having children. Demographic survey researchers have paid little attention to interviews and the way in which fertility questions are asked and responses negotiated between each respondent and each interviewer. This is despite considerable criticism from within and outside demography and concern about non-sampling error.

This study uses talk-in-interaction analysis (widely referred to as Conversation Analysis (CA)) to examine data from interviews with 27 women and one interviewer on questions in the *Women on Children* (WOC) Survey, 1998. These questions are part of an ongoing survey, *Negotiating the Life Course* (NLC), a longitudinal telephone survey of Australians' work and family lives. The study addresses questions in three areas of particular concern for Australian women's child bearing in the future: the likelihood of having a child or another child; factors determining the timing of the first child; and the value of children to Australian women. The detailed CA transcription conventions make interaction between respondent and interviewer transparent, not only for the research but for others examining the data.

This study demonstrates that responses to the WOC and NLC survey questions are the product of negotiation and locally managed turn-by-turn collaboration between interviewer and respondent. The stimulus–response model of questions and answers on which standardised survey interview procedures are based is a vast over-simplification of what occurs. Because the norms of ordinary conversation are a powerful influence in interviewer–respondent interaction, the paradigmatic sequence of question–answer rarely occurs. Interviewer behaviour is frequently directive as a pragmatic reaction to obtaining a response under difficult interactional circumstances. Detailed examination of WOC interview data reveals how questions, representing the absent researcher, work in practice: how respondents' answers become responses allowed on the interview schedule. Responses can be understood only in the context of interaction.

The questions on the likelihood of having a child or another child were problematic for women for whom factors beyond their control were operating—that is, where likelihood



was difficult to predict. The interaction on the field-coded question about factors determining the timing of the first child showed clear differences between younger and older women in the WOC Survey, perhaps reflecting social and economic change in the lifetimes of those women. It also showed that a dichotomy between planned and unplanned births is simplistic. The detail of interaction reveals precisely the grounds for arguing that field-coded questions are unworkable. The third question—a set of attitude statements on the value of children—was problematic in that it did not adequately direct the women's responses. The individual statements, taken from earlier surveys, did not work as expected. Women showed that they interpreted questions in various ways, as it was unclear whether their responses were to be personal or general. Other difficulties, such as problems of comparison, problems of reference, and ambiguous wording, became evident. The study shows that some questions appear to be better suited to qualitative investigation than to survey questions; responses to survey questions often do not reflect the way that women talk and think about some of these complex life experiences. Overall, analysis of transcribed interview data shows that standardised wording and delivery are elusive phenomena.

The study has implications for the survey process, question design and testing, interviewer training, transcription of research interview data, and issues of cost and duration. The analysis of interview data in this study has wider implications for the way in which standardisation is understood in demographic survey research. To say that interviews are 'standardised' gives a false impression of what occurs, and standardisation cannot be assumed. Validity and reliability are seriously called into question. The findings of this study in a monolingual situation have implications for multi-lingual surveys of the type conducted by the *World Fertility Survey*, *Contraceptive Prevalence Surveys*, and the *Demographic and Health Surveys*. Data from surveys that involve interpreting or translation in multi-lingual situations would be expected to be even more questionable, as interviewers are placed in a far more complex situation. Use of CA transcription holds potential for evaluation of survey research data wherever surveys are used. As a relatively low-cost qualitative method, this type of research is a powerful tool for the evaluation of the survey data essential to formulation of policies and programmes.

## Introduction

---

Demographic surveys have used standardised interviews to create numerical data representing the life experience and attitudes of millions of people. These surveys cover a wide variety of issues, including fertility decisions and preferences. This research focuses attention on the interaction between the interviewer and respondents in order to investigate precisely how these data are created. Questions asked of Australian women about having children form the topic for this investigation.

This introductory chapter situates this research in the intersection of several disciplinary fields: demographic data collection; language and interaction, with a focus on interaction in survey interviews; and survey methodology. At the end of the chapter are the objectives of the thesis and an outline of subsequent chapters.

### 1.1 Surveys in demographic research

Surveys are the primary data collection tools used by demographers to collect information, among other purposes, as input for national and international policy making (Presser 1997:295; Teachman, Paasch and Carver 1993:529). The international demographic survey enterprise is huge, involving many people, many stages, considerable amounts of money and large amounts of time. Worldwide, millions of people have been respondents, answering questions in the World Fertility Survey (WFS) (1973–84), the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) (1984 to the present), numerous Contraceptive Prevalence Surveys, as well as a multitude of national and local surveys carried out by governments and researchers in universities and other research institutions. At the centre of each survey is a single event—the interview—repeated many times with many respondents, where information or ‘data’ is ‘collected’ from each respondent. This event can occur face-to-face, over the telephone, or by mail. The expected outcome is a completed questionnaire or interview schedule that is then coded and analysed, with other questionnaires, to

produce data input for policy and programs. As Foddy (1993:10) remarks, 'reliance on verbal data does not appear to be in any danger of waning'.

Whatever the form of the interview, whether the researcher or interviewer is present or not, language is the medium for asking and answering questions. Interaction between respondents and interviewers determines what is filled in on the schedule or questionnaire and the meaning that is taken away from the interview (Suchman and Jordan 1990a). The spoken or written words and meanings of the people involved in that single event, repeated many times and processed through many stages, ultimately form the social knowledge that has the potential to affect the lives of large numbers of individuals.

Over the past several decades, a vast literature has accumulated on the use of surveys. This literature covers methodology, training, and analysis, and has spawned a multitude of specialised instruction manuals. More and more research effort has been directed at improving the survey instrument in specialised centres in the United States (US), such as the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), the Bureau of the Census, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), and the DHS (Fienberg 1990:242; Macro International Inc. 1997b). Virtually every social science discipline has contributed to the enterprise, as the following selection shows.

Cognitive psychologists have investigated processes involved in producing answers (Hastie 1987; Schwarz and Sudman 1996; Strack and Martin 1987; Tourangeau 1987);<sup>1</sup> social psychologists have contributed to research on asking about attitudes (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Edwards 1957; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Giles and St. Clair 1985; McGuire 1985; Moghaddam 1998; Oppenheim 1966, 1992; Oskamp 1991; Turner and Martin 1984); psycholinguists have examined how the brain processes language in communication (Clark 1985; Clark and Clark 1977; Clark and Schober 1992). Political scientists have examined ways of ascertaining public opinion (see Schuman and Presser 1981:3–5). Both philosophers of language (Austin 1962; Grice 1989; Searle 1971) and sociologists (Goffman 1981, 1983; Schuman and Presser 1981) have worked on speech-act theory related to questions and answers. Sociolinguists have examined social aspects of language use relevant to surveys

---

<sup>1</sup> Fienberg (1990) and Jobe and Mingay (1991) provide a useful history and overview.

(Brown and Levinson 1987; Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton *et al.* 1992). Market research has informed surveys on buying and selling (Robinson 1984). Information technologists have developed computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) (Nicholls 1988) and random-digit dialling (RDD).

Alongside work on sample design and data processing, a specialised and very much smaller literature on survey question design has developed, drawing on research in linguistics, sociology, philosophy and psychology—although, as Foddy (1993:x) notes, ‘the theory of question wording has not been as far advanced as one might wish’.<sup>2</sup> Turner and Martin noted in 1984 that few rules existed in the area of question wording and that no theory, accepted procedure, or standard existed for dealing with criticisms of bias or fairness of wording: ‘One of the few generally recognized rules is that the results obtained in any survey are dependent on the exact questions that are asked’ (Turner and Martin 1984:77). Hippler and Schwarz (1987:102) also lamented the lack of a theory of asking questions, given the contribution of non-sampling error to the limitations of survey data. Payne’s (1951) work on asking questions is still acknowledged as the classic in the field of question design and, together with the work on speech-act theory of Austin (1962), Searle (1971) and Grice (1971, 1975, 1989), provides an initial theoretical basis for those looking at language in question design.

Issues in the construction of questions and questionnaires have been taken up by survey improvers such as Bradburn and Sudman (1979), Converse and Schuman (1984), Sudman and Bradburn (1982), Converse and Presser (1986), Dijkstra and van der Zouwen (1982), Edwards (1957), Foddy (1993), Groves (1989), Hippler, Schwarz and Sudman (1987), Hippler and Schwarz (1987), Molenaar and Smit (1996), Schaeffer and Thomson (1992), Schuman and Presser (1981), Schwarz and Sudman (1996), Smit (1995) and Smit, Dijkstra and van der Zouwen (1997). Foddy (1993:11) comments, however, that ‘...no great improvements have been made over the last fifty years to our techniques for collecting verbal data’ and that ‘there are few signs that social researchers have made major improvements in their ways’. Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:8)<sup>3</sup> points out that part of the problem in question design is that

---

<sup>2</sup> Foddy (1993) provides a useful review of the history of, debates on, and issues in constructing questions.

<sup>3</sup> Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000: 3–9) has comprehensively reviewed research on question characteristics: format, order, context effects, response options and order, wording and interpretation.

avoiding ambiguity is difficult because of the inherent ambiguity of language that serves many other communication purposes:

The main problem for survey methodology and question design is that these studies do not tell us how to phrase questions in an unambiguous way right from the start. This is because unambiguous questions hardly exist, due to the intrinsic ambiguity of language. The best that authors can come up with are pieces of advice on what questionnaire designers should avoid doing...

Part of the explanation for this lack of attention to improving data collection methods seems to lie in the fact that the media and industry are increasingly dependent on instant results from marketing and opinion polls, while the growth of methods of social research that produce such results has attracted many analysts who have little interest in the methodological issues underlying verbal data collection (Foddy 1993:x).

Notwithstanding the effort that has been directed at researching and improving the survey method, the usefulness of the survey as a method of data collection has been debated for decades, and critics have been severe (e.g., Briggs 1986; Cicourel 1982; Foddy 1993; Geertz 1983; McNicoll 1992; Turner and Martin 1984:xiii; Waring 1988:117). Together with researchers from other disciplines, demographers themselves have become critics of the adequacy of their own methods of data collection (e.g., Caldwell, Hill and Hull 1988b:xv; Greenhalgh 1996) and the ability of surveys to yield insights into demographic behaviour (e.g., McNicoll 1988:10). Caldwell and Hill (1988:1) note 'the reluctance of demographers to engage in research whose output cannot be measured in numerical terms'—one of the reasons they mention for social science research on demographic issues being 'surprisingly deficient in theory'. Caldwell and Hill (1988:1) note the dominance of 'a single survey method': the sample survey and standardised analytical techniques. Some demographers call for a more balanced approach to the use of surveys (e.g., Hull, Hull and Singarimbun 1988). Hull (2001:206) has argued that 'neither numbers nor words alone suffice in the quest for understanding that is the goal of scientific interpretation'.

Demographers have long complained about the quality of data available for research and policy formulation (e.g., Awusabo-Asare 1988; Hauser and Duncan 1959:6; Hermalin and Lui 1990:337; Hugo 1988; T.H. Hull, personal communication, 1997, MacCormack 1988:441; Pison and Langaney 1988:297; Williams, Sobieszczyk and Perez 2001:244). This is despite the considerable achievements in demographic

analysis (Hauser and Duncan 1959:8; McNicoll 1992:400ff). In 1959 Hauser and Duncan (1959:7) stated: 'A competent demographer is one who can reach valid conclusions even when the data are not what they might be'. Lucas (1985:13) noted:

In the face of so many technical advances, and the corresponding expansion of 'Armchair Demography', some participants at the International Population Conference in Florence in 1985 felt it necessary to ask the IUSSP to put greater emphasis on data collection.

A fundamental problem lies in the fact that those who are responsible for collecting demographic data are often not those responsible for its analysis, the phenomenon of 'Armchair Demography' (Lucas and Kane 1985:3–4). The purpose for collecting the data also may not coincide with the purpose of the analysis.

At the IUSSP meeting in Beijing in 1997 Hull summarised the discussion on data quality and accessibility as follows: 'It is fair to say that the quality of much demographic data is declining in many areas of the world...' (T.H. Hull, personal communication, 1997). This is despite the fact that major international surveys have been conducted and should have resulted in higher quality and more accessible data. Lucas (1985:13) notes that data coding produces another set of problems because of the need to group responses into categories to facilitate analysis. Grouping requires simplification, which normally involves a loss of information, thus adding to the problem of inadequate data. The difficulties in meaningful analysis of data are acknowledged to be greater when comparisons are made between countries, perhaps because of differences in meanings created in language and culture. In Pressat's (1972:11) words:

The use of collections of demographic statistics for different countries is often difficult. For comparative studies, the data may require considerable correction and adjustment, as well as a great deal of handling.

One way of addressing dissatisfaction with data quality in demography has been to use various micro-research methods, often as a complement to survey research, as demonstrated by many of the papers included in Caldwell, Hill and Hull (1988b), such as Adeokun (1988), Caldwell, Reddy and Caldwell (1988b), Caldwell (1988:458–9), Fulton and Randall (1988), Knodel, Pramualratana and Havanon (1988), van de Walle (1988), and Vlassof (1988). Some demographers have written on the potential for qualitative methods as a different way of collecting data (e.g., Bacon 1993; Hull *et al.* 1988; Iskandar, Utomo, Hull *et al.* 1996; Kamuzora 1989; Knodel 1997; Obermeyer 1997; Randall 1988; Scrimshaw and Hurtado 1987; Steckler, McLeroy,

Goodman, Bird *et al.* 1992; Stone and Campbell 1984; Williams *et al.* 2001). Some have advocated local, small-scale or community studies (Caldwell 1988:469; Caldwell, Campbell, Caldwell, Ruzicka *et al.* 1976; Hull *et al.* 1988; Hull, Rusman and Utomo 1996; Lindsay 1996; Nag and Kak 1988; Obermeyer 1997; Penny and Singarimbun 1973; Vlassof 1988) and research into effects on fertility of institutions at the local level (McNicoll 1988). However, qualitative methods *per se* have not been adopted as a solution to dissatisfaction with data quality.

Researchers from other disciplines have tended to be more vocal than demographers in their criticisms of methods of data collection in the social sciences. Researchers from disciplines outside demography, such as sociologists, anthropologists, and ethnographers, have also often provided leadership and guidance in the matter of demographic data collection (see Caldwell, Caldwell and Caldwell 1987; Greenhalgh 1995; Greenhalgh 1996; Presser 1997). Cicourel, as a sociologist researching fertility in Argentina, made the following comment on demographic concerns:

...the study of fertility behavior and other demographic concerns should be application of theories about interactional settings and how members create accounts to represent their everyday experience (Cicourel 1974:10).

Anthropologists have been particularly critical of the exclusively statistical approach of demographers to data collection (e.g., Bleek 1987; Carter 1995; Greenhalgh 1990; Greenhalgh 1995; Hammel 1990; Meekers 1992; Stone and Campbell 1984). Weiss (1976:351) noted in 1976 that although demographic theory had contributed to anthropology, through demographic variables providing a 'unifying metric' for anthropology, demographers seemed uninterested in 'dynamic problems of biocultural evolution in small societies'. Complaints about data quality, criticism of the quantitative methods that dominate demographic surveys, and the increased use of qualitative methods by demographers have, however, led to a recent and growing literature on qualitative research methods in demography and demography-related fields (e.g., Bacon 1993; Britten 1995; Caldwell *et al.* 1987; Hull *et al.* 1996; Kertzer 1997; Knodel 1997; Obermeyer 1997; Renne 1994; Williams *et al.* 2001). In 1982 the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) established a Working Group on Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research, that has since become the Committee on Anthropological Demography (Carter 1998), giving more prominence to the place of anthropological methods in investigating demographic phenomena.

Because of their heavy reliance on statistical methods (Caldwell and Hill 1988:8; Hauser and Duncan 1959: Part 1), demographers have also come under fire from within the discipline for their general approach to methodological issues. Although rarely focusing on the role of language in demographic research, demographers have for some time expressed concern about the narrow scope and focus of demography and population studies, where emphasis is more on analysing data than on the process of collection of data (e.g., Demeny 1988; Hauser and Duncan 1959; Hayes 1994:8; McNicoll 1992; Presser 1997). This concern includes a concern with the role of other social science disciplines in demographic research, the role of theory *vis-à-vis* empirical research, and a concern with the quality of data demographers collect and analyse in the process of their research into population phenomena.

One response across the social sciences to poor data has been an increase in the use of qualitative methods (Berg 1989). Qualitative methods have played a prominent role in research on women, for example (Berik 1997; Ervin-Tripp 1987; Esim 1997; Fisher 2000; Freed 1996; Kim 1997; Oakley 1981; Personal Narratives Group 1989; Petersen 1987; Richards 1978; Roberts 1981). Feminist researchers have a well-developed body of research on 'getting at hidden voices' (Gilligan 1982) in the areas of oral history, subaltern studies, women's studies, and the development studies literature on women's role in development (Harding 1987). To investigate women's experience, feminist researchers frequently use in-depth interviews and other micro-methods in preference to surveys in order to represent respondents' meanings (Devault 1990; Ervin-Tripp 1987; Esim 1997; Kim 1997; Oakley 1981; Olmsted 1997; Personal Narratives Group 1989; Presser 1997; Roberts 1981; Waring 1988; Watkins 1993). One finding is that 'like' talking to 'like' is the best way to give voice to intimate or self-disclosing stories, as in Kim's (1997) study using poor women to survey poor women. However, in demography, analyses of gender issues from a feminist perspective 'have been few and are regarded as marginal to the field' (Presser 1997:296), with no 'synthesis' yet of feminist theoretical insights with demographic questions (McDaniel 1996). Demographers have 'remained curiously resistant to the sorts of feminist interrogation and transformation' that have occurred in other disciplines (Greenhalgh 1995:23).

Recently, the disciplinary scope of demography has come under increased criticism. The contributions of McNicoll (1992), Presser (1997), Greenhalgh (1996), Liao (1996) and Wilson (1999) are examples. Wilson (1999:13) suggests a serious neglect of wider methodological issues in demography:



Compared with statistics, economics, or the natural sciences, demography seems to have suffered a considerable degree of methodological 'lock-in'...Since World War II there has been a revolution in the availability of individual level data collected in surveys, yet remarkably often the first instinct of demographers has been to aggregate that information and analyze it as if it came from the census or vital registration. In short, demography has been very slow to embrace the potential of life history analysis and other forms of individual level methodology.

Wilson (1999:14) argues that it is time for change:

Clearly demography needs to reconsider both its methodology and its explanatory frameworks in order to incorporate more explicitly the extent of individual variation. Only by this means can we address the fundamental issues of how individual acts produce aggregate population processes.

Other demographers, historical demographers among them, have expressed regret at the lack of focus on individuals or couples in fertility research (Kertzer 1997; Szreter 1996). For example, in relation to the Princeton project on fertility change, Kertzer (1997:841) laments:

Since the behavior of individuals or couples was not studied, many of the theories that pertain to the conditions under which people change their fertility behavior could not be tested.

Szreter (1996:444–5), examining fertility change in Britain between 1860 and 1940, points out that:

A genuinely satisfactory, comprehensive explanation of fertility change has to refer directly to the concrete concerns and perceptions of historical individuals, properly contextualised in their households and varying social environments. Simply to invoke large-scale, impersonal economic forces or cultural change is to remain at an unconvincing distance from the phenomenon and to fail to take into account the significant historical and intra-national variation that is everywhere evident, as this study has demonstrated in the British case. The direct agency of change was each set of potential parents and the locus of change was each family household in its local context.

'Properly contextualised' means collecting and analysing the texts that embody the meanings of the participants in the research, both researchers and respondents.<sup>4</sup> Without this type of textual analysis, the context for individuals remains subject to the interpretation only of those who took part in the particular interactions during the survey or interview and is not available to a wider circle of interested parties, including other researchers; thus the context remains invisible. This invisibility of the research context stands in stark contrast to statistical analysis of research data, which

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Fisher's (2000) study of birth control practices in Britain, 1925–50.

is expected to be much more transparent in the process of justifying and presenting findings.

In Australia, researchers have noted the need to supplement survey data with data that will provide explanations for trends in fertility. Richards (1978:23–4), in *Having Families*, observed:

Australia may now be well supplied with information about demographic trends. But full explanations of those trends are still missing...While changing patterns of family formation are now clearly indicated, few are clearly understood.

Some studies have attempted to underpin trends with explanation; Lindsay's (1996) study of 15 Australian heterosexual couples living together is a useful example of how micro-analysis can be carried out through a series of in-depth interviews. This type of small-scale but in-depth research methodology seems to be particularly important for research that aims to identify motivations and the meaning that people attach to what they do. It allows the kind of focus on what people say and how they say it which is required to shed light on what the concept 'cohabitation' means to the couples and individuals in the survey. It also allows a 'reality check' for the researcher: how is this concept the same or different for different respondents and the same as or different from the concept of the researcher?

In his introduction to the Life Course Project, McDonald (Research School of Social Sciences 1998:13–14) notes:

The large-scale entry of women into paid employment, irrespective of their life course status, represents one of the most profound changes that western societies have experienced in recent decades. The mass movement of women into the public sphere of employment is transforming the major institutions of our society: the family, the labour market and industrial relations, the education system and the tax-transfer system. Economic theories of human capital, based largely on a male breadwinner approach to the labour market, cannot adequately explain women's involvement with the labour market. New home economics theory, with its emphasis on maximising household benefits, **also fails to give adequate recognition to individual motivations.** The separation of the public and private spheres, implicit in the male breadwinner model of the family, is now unsustainable. Labour force decisions of women, and increasingly of men as well, are interwoven with decisions about living arrangements, household organisation, family formation and child-rearing. The project is designed to address these issues of theory. (Emphasis added).

It is only by giving voice to the individuals who make up the 'large-scale entry' and the 'mass movement' that a collective picture may gradually be built up of what motivates women and men in the decisions they make and how these small-scale decisions ultimately shape our society.

In summary, it seems that it is timely for demographers to take responsibility for the quality of their data, rather than deeming the methodological, language and cultural issues in data collection the concern primarily of anthropologists, sociologists and other non-demographers. If this is so, there is considerable relevance also in the broader issues of research and epistemology, as raised by anthropologists, sociologists, and philosophers, such as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), Cicourel (1973, 1974, 1982), Geertz (1983, 1995), and Headland, Harris and Pike (1990). For demographers, the crucial place to start to examine the issues in data collection is the survey interview. Foddy's (1993:189) view is that 'the best way to improve the quality of the verbal data we collect is through a better understanding of the nature of question-answer behaviour'. Foddy (1993:21) and Clark (1985) both suggest interactionist models for doing so.

Although various models have been applied to analysis of survey interviews—speech act theory and symbolic interactionism are two of these—the research for this thesis adopts the methodology of conversation analysis (CA), which has its roots in ethnomethodology, because of its focus on the detail of interaction. Before introducing CA as a methodology for examining interaction in standardised survey interviews, the following section examines the literature on the role of language and interaction in the social sciences in general and demographic research in particular.

## **1.2 Language and interaction in social science research**

One of the concerns of researchers and practitioners is that survey takers neglect the role of language and interaction in survey interviews. This reflects a concern across the social sciences generally that conventional quantitative data-gathering techniques are yielding information that is inadequate for social science research. This concern has been voiced in most areas of academic research and by survey researchers themselves (Fowler and Mangione 1990; Oppenheim 1992). Some disciplines have shown an ongoing interest in language issues relevant to their research. In anthropology, attention to language has been a central issue since the work of Malinowski in the 1920s (Firth 1957; Malinowski 1944, 1948). Others have struggled to bring language nearer to the top of the research agenda. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) highlighted language as an important consideration in sociological research; Goffman (1983) emphasised the importance of studying social interaction; and Cicourel (1964:Ch.8, 1974; 1982) expressed the need for empirical research on 'the interview as a communicative event' (Cicourel 1974:10). Cicourel's (1980:1) work on

language and social interaction was an early effort to bring together sociologists and philosophers over a common interest in language, namely the application of speech-act theory to the study of social interaction.

Textual analysis of what people say about what they do has been increasingly recognised as a valuable tool in social-science research (Stubbs 1983), and has been applied, for example, in the form of a word analysis of newspaper articles on population issues (Misiti 2001). After work in the 1970s and 1980s with Mexicanos in New Mexico, Briggs (1986:14) called on researchers to focus on the research encounter and its context and provided a set of procedures by which to do so. He observed that 'we now possess the conceptual tools to assess where interviews will succeed and where and how they will fail in a given research project' (Briggs 1986:xiv). Hastings (1998:191–2) documents a growing interest in the societal implications of how language is used in the social policy process, but adds that few social-science studies examine the detail of how language is used in particular settings or contexts. The voices outside demography calling for more attention to interaction in interviews, such as Bailey (1982), Briggs (1986), Cicourel (1973, 1974, 1980, 1982), Foddy (1993), McCracken (1988:15), and Suchman and Jordan (1990a), coincide in their view that the way to improve the quality of data collection in survey interviews is through better understanding of the interview processes.

Within demography, voices calling for attention to the role of language in data collection have been few. Some attention has been given to macro-level language issues, such as the demography of languages, language identity (Basu and Amin 2000; Population Council 2000), the distribution of their speakers, and language difference as a characteristic of a population that can explain aspects of their demographic behaviour. Peil and Lucas (1972), for example, mention the influence of a multilingual environment in West Africa. Other researchers have noted the role of language differences in fertility research in Africa (Awusabo-Asare 1988; Lucas and Ware 1977; Peil and Lucas 1972; Ware 1977), Bangladesh (Basu and Amin 2000), and the South Pacific (Winn and Lucas 1993), and the neglect of language differences and difficulties as a source of non-sampling error (Lucas and Ware 1977). Few acknowledge that interaction might play a role in collection of demographic data.

After the WFS, both researchers (Awusabo-Asare 1988; Lucas and Ware 1977; Ware 1977) and survey takers (Jemai and Singh 1987; Vaessen, Scott, Verrall and Coulibaly 1987) called for greater care in incorporating a concern for language issues in future

surveys. Lucas and Ware (1977:235) recommended that researchers be 'more conscious of and thorough' in their reporting of linguistic problems and solutions. Their recommendations concerned multilingual situations:

Any interpretation of survey results should take into account the possibility that differentials have been influenced by variations in the way the question was posed or understood...When a finding is totally unexpected, researchers should look into the possibility of a misunderstanding or a mistranslation of the question; unfortunately where these reinforce an expected finding they are much less likely to be discovered (Lucas and Ware 1977:235).

In their paper on language differences and family planning surveys, Lucas and Ware (1977:233) point out one of the difficulties of overcoming language-related problems:

Whereas sampling errors (errors arising because only a part of the total population is included in the sample) can be reduced by survey statisticians through improved sample design, the reduction of response error and bias resulting from language differences requires action at the field level.

Language variations that reflect differences in age, sex, education, and economic status also exist in areas having only a single language, although these variations are not always recognised as being significant (Lucas and Ware 1977:233). Srinivas (1988:452) suggested that increasing numbers of Third World micro-researchers would study their own societies, thereby avoiding the problem of principal investigators not being sufficiently fluent in the languages of the people they are studying. More recently, in Russell, Sobo and Thompson's (2000) collection of anthropological writings, *Contraception across Cultures*, Willis and Pratt (2000:45–6) have taken up experience from the WFS. They urge serious consideration of translation and interpretation issues with regard to the research instrument and warn that survey analysts generally fail to take sufficient account of problems of translation, language and communication that may occur in data collection. Todd's (1984) study of negotiations between doctors and patients over the prescription of contraception, and Maternowska's (2000) study of a family planning clinic in Haiti are unusual among demography-related studies for their focus on interaction—transcriptions of interviews between doctors and clients. Maternowska (2000:103) cites Warwick (1982:183) on the importance of these interviews, or 'transactions':

Perhaps the most critical transaction of all in family planning programs is that between the program and the client, for all others ultimately revolve around that nexus. If this transaction fails, the program will fail with it.

Such appreciation of the crucial importance of interaction as 'transaction' is rare in writing on demographic issues, partly because the methodology used does not allow

such a clear focus on the interactional nature of the data and the role of interaction in its creation. Demographers mention 'rapport' (see, for example, Hermalin and Lui 1990:337) and 'social interaction' (Bongaarts and Watkins 1996), but despite calls for an examination of interactional settings and systems of communication, no systematic effort at such examination has been made. The chapter by Lavin and Maynard (2002) in Maynard *et al.*'s (2002) recent collection is the first to address one of the specific mechanisms by which rapport is established through interaction in survey interviews. The question of how interaction between interviewer and respondent might affect our knowledge of fertility issues remains unanswered.

In 1990 an important paper by the anthropologists Suchman and Jordan was published by the *Journal of the American Statistical Association* (Suchman and Jordan 1990a, 1990b). The paper, entitled 'Interactional troubles in face-to-face survey interviews', suggested that statisticians should rethink survey interviews as a fundamentally interactional event, and demonstrated that researchers' confidence in the validity of survey data may be misplaced by prohibiting interaction between interviewer and respondent in the interests of reliability. The paper was based on the analysis of five video-taped interviews using the US *General Social Survey* (GSS) and the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and was accompanied by commentary from experts in survey methods (Fienberg 1990; Hahn 1990; Kovar and Royston 1990; Tourangeau 1990) and CA, or talk-in-interaction (Schegloff 1990).<sup>5</sup>

Suchman and Jordan's (1990a) paper has made little impact on the attention demographers pay to interaction in demographic surveys, despite the direct relevance of its findings. It has, however, initiated more systematic efforts in other disciplines to examine the proposition that survey interviews are interactional events. Indeed, the body of research on language and interaction in survey interviews continues to grow. Initially and overall, survey research has used a stimulus-response model (Foddy 1993:12; Kahn and Cannell 1957:107) and has tended to view the respondent and the interviewer as two separate elements in the survey process and to focus on the separate elements in the interview process, rather than on interaction between the

---

<sup>5</sup> Many analysts now prefer the term 'talk-in-interaction' because 'conversation' is too limited a term for what CA covers. Although 'talk-in-interaction' is the most appropriate term for the analysis of survey-interview interaction (Psathas 1995:2-3; Schegloff 1987a:101; ten Have 1999), for reasons of convenience CA will also be used throughout the thesis as an acronym covering both conversation analysis and the analysis of talk-in-interaction.

elements.<sup>6</sup> While some survey researchers recognise explicitly that interaction is fundamental to interviews (Fowler and Mangione 1990:55; Kahn and Cannell 1957:16), much of the survey literature has addressed respondent effects, response and non-response error, interviewer effects and bias, and questions and their effects, form and wording as opposed to how these separate elements are interrelated. The work of Schaeffer and her colleagues at the University of Wisconsin (1991a; Schaeffer and Maynard 1996; Schaeffer, Maynard and Cradock 1993; Schaeffer and Thomson 1992) on demographic surveys and of van der Zouwen, Dijkstra and Smit (1991) are exceptions to this.

More recently, a body of literature on interaction in survey interviews has developed. Ethnomethodologists, specifically conversation analysts analysing forms of talk-in-interaction, have the necessary tools with which to examine interaction with the development of detailed transcription techniques for the analysis of conversation and other types of talk in interaction (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). Schegloff (1990:248) notes the importance of applying Suchman and Jordan's findings to the survey enterprise in order to investigate 'the bearing of this "interview" way of organizing talk on what is to be made of its products'.

Despite the increasing use of micro-research methods in demography and calls for methodological change, detailed examination of interaction in the survey process has not occurred for demographic surveys. Despite Suchman and Jordan's (1990a) demonstration that confidence in data obtained through standardised survey interviews is probably misplaced, no more systematic study of language and interactional issues in demographic survey interviews has been forthcoming, although studies of interaction in standardised survey interviews have become increasingly available since the publication of Suchman and Jordan's paper (Antaki and Rapley 1996; Heritage 1994; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 2000; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki 1997; Maynard *et al.* 2002; Moore 1999a; Schaeffer 1991a; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Schober and Conrad 1997; Smit 1995; Smit *et al.* 1997). This lack of attention has serious implications for demography, as one of the 'more numerical' of the social sciences (Caldwell and Hill 1988:8; Turner and Martin 1984:Vol.1, p.4).

---

<sup>6</sup> Another model is the 'vessel-of-answers' approach (Holstein and Gubrium 1995:34). In this model, the respondent is seen as having a stock of knowledge that needs only to be activated by the delivery of an interviewer's question.

Given the glimmer of interest that demographers show in the importance of language, if not interaction, in survey interviews, the aim of the present study is to explore the linguistic and interactional processes of demographic survey interviews through the methods of CA. This additional perspective may at least provide another dimension in which to view the role of interview processes in collecting data. The following section introduces CA as a method for analysing interaction in standardised survey interviews.

### **1.3 Conversation Analysis (CA), institutional talk, and standardised survey interviews**

CA, or talk-in-interaction, had its beginnings in the mid-1960s in the doctoral research and lectures of Harvey Sacks (Sacks 1995) at the Berkeley campus of the University of California. Sacks studied with Garfinkel, the founder of ethnomethodology, and Goffman, whose sociological work on face-to-face interaction influenced Sacks' work.<sup>7</sup> Together with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, Sacks developed what has become a characteristically CA approach to the analysis of naturally occurring interaction as social action in itself, through the detailed examination of recordings and transcripts of interaction. Recording and transcription of the details of talk allows researchers to observe directly the way in which an activity is accomplished by the participants in that interaction, rather than depending on 'analytic theorizing and a concomitant reliance on idealized models of action' (Whalen 1992:304). Recordings (audio- or video-) are an essential element of CA because they provide the chance to replay or review data over and over again, since topics and phenomena are not preselected, and since transcription in itself is a very revealing activity. Because transcripts are available for all researchers to examine, CA allows for replicability and cumulative findings in a way that is difficult in other social sciences. Other researchers, therefore, may examine the same and additional materials, and replicate or extend the initial analyses. Video-recording has also enabled analysis of the way gestures, direction of gaze and body movement are co-ordinated with talk (Goodwin 1981; Heath 1986; Rendle-Short 2002).

---

<sup>7</sup> See Bailey (1982:283–4), Heritage (1984b), Mehan and Wood (1975), Psathas (1979) and ten Have (1999:Ch.1) for discussions of the development of ethnomethodology and CA. Psathas (1995:67) describes ethnomethodology as '...the study of ways in which members ongoingly produce social order, focusing on the indexical and reflexive features of such production and on the pragmatic character of accounts, while at the same time refusing to present its findings and formulations in overly theoretical or abstract terms'.



Conversation analysts have mostly settled on Jefferson's system of transcription because the use of varying systems can confuse rather than facilitate communication among researchers in the field.<sup>8</sup> The transcription system aims to reflect all the features of talk, such as kinds of intonation, pauses, sound stretches, speed, emphasis, and overlapping speech; what is normally invisible, or taken for granted, becomes visible through such a detailed systematic transcription. Together with the advantage of replicability, the detail of the transcription system gives CA a 'powerful lens' (Moerman 1988:x) through which to view the minutiae of interaction.

Through cumulative transcription and analysis of recorded data, CA has built up a body of evidence showing that conversation is not a chaotic and disorderly activity, but rather displays a very fine order of organisation at all points (Sacks 1984a:24; Silverman 1998:126). Participants, as well as analysts, 'orient to' this order. Talk is locally organised and managed and 'interactionally' or jointly produced (Sacks *et al.* 1974:725), with respect to turn order and turn size.<sup>9</sup> The investigation of orderliness in conversation has remained the focus of CA since the mid-1960s. The interactional phenomena include utterances and activities, actions and movements, as well as 'talk', but no assumptions are made about what the motives, intentions or purposes, emotions, moods or feelings of the participants might be, unless these are matters of which the participants themselves display awareness in the interaction. CA seeks to remain faithful to the perspectives of participants themselves. What is available to the hearer is also available to the observer. Meanings are 'indexical'—dependent on context and participants. The past is not taken into account (Psathas 1995:49).<sup>10</sup>

In its early work, CA identified three major areas for exploration: organisation of sequences (Schegloff 1979, 1980; Schegloff and Sacks 1973), organisation of turn taking (Sacks *et al.* 1974), and the system of repair—the set of procedures used to

---

<sup>8</sup> Gardner (1994) has compiled a version of the CA transcription system as developed primarily by Jefferson (1984a), Atkinson and Heritage (1984:ix–xvi), Sacks *et al.* (1974:696–735) and Schegloff's unpublished course notes. Transcription systems may vary slightly but conventions are fairly standard.

<sup>9</sup> Sacks *et al.* (1974:725) elaborate this concept of conversation as a locally managed system. The allocation of turns is accomplished in each turn for a next turn, and turn size is also determined as each turn develops 'under constraints imposed by a next turn, and by an orientation to a next turn in the current one'. The concept of an interactionally managed system relies on a turn unit of a sort which '(a) employs a specification of minimal sizes, but (b) provides for expansion within a unit, (c) is stoppable (though not at any point), and (d) has transition places discretely recurring within it, (e) which can themselves be expanded or contracted' (Sacks *et al.* 1974:726). These issues are further discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>10</sup> An exception is Button's (1991) study of talk in a series.

resolve 'troubles' in talk between speakers and recipients of talk (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977).<sup>11</sup> The first stage of CA research has been characterised as 'unmotivated looking', not based on 'some preformulated theorizing which may specify matters of greater or lesser significance' (Psathas 1995:45).<sup>12</sup> In general, conversation analysts are not interested in the ethnographic particulars of persons, places, and settings. Their view is that the orderliness of the interaction is not dependent on particular persons or particular settings. Data are not hypothetical, and in practice this means that the interaction would have occurred regardless of whether the researcher had come upon the scene. Particular work has been done on talk on the telephone (Bean and Johnstone 1994; Drew and Heritage 1992b; Hopper 1992; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995; Houtkoop-Steenstra and van den Bergh 2000; Lavin and Maynard 2002; Liddicoat, Brown, Döpke and Love 1992; Moore 1999a; Schegloff 1968, 1979, 1986).

Psathas (1995:2–3) sets out the basic assumptions of conversation analysis as follows:

1. Order is a produced orderliness.
2. Order is produced by the parties in situ; that is, it is situated and occasioned.
3. The parties orient to that order themselves; that is, the order is not an analyst's conception, not the result of the use of some preformed or preformulated theoretical conceptions concerning what action should/must/ought to be, or based on generalizing or summarizing statements about what action generally/frequently/often is.
4. Order is repeatable and recurrent.
5. The discovery, description, and analysis of that produced orderliness is the task of the analyst.
6. Issues of how frequently, how widely, or how often particular phenomena occur are to be set aside in the interest of discovering, describing, and analyzing the structures, the machinery, the organized practices, the formal procedures, the ways in which order is produced.
7. Structures of social action, once so discerned, can be described and analyzed in formal, that is structural, organizational, logical, atopically contentless, consistent, and abstract, terms.

Among early collections of CA research are those edited by Sudnow (1972), Schenkein (1978), Psathas (1979), Atkinson and Heritage (1984), and Button and Lee (1987). In the 1980s special issues of *Sociological Inquiry*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*,

---

<sup>11</sup> A description of these areas, particularly as they relate to interviews, follows in Chapter 3.

<sup>12</sup> This is similar to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) inductive approach to qualitative analysis, in that theory is constructed from what emerges from examination of the data.

*Human Studies*, *Social Problems* and the *Western Journal of Speech Communication* were devoted to ethnomethodology and CA, demonstrating the ethnomethodologist's concern with 'the natural order in the use of social knowledge' and the conversation analyst's specific concern with talk as doing social action (Mehan and Wood 1975:118).

Two main areas of CA have developed: analysis of 'ordinary' conversation and the investigation of talk in institutional settings—'institutional talk'—in such collections as Drew and Heritage (1992a), Boden (1994), and Boden and Zimmerman (1991).<sup>13</sup> Institutional interactions are 'work- or task-oriented and "non-conversational"' (Drew and Heritage 1992a:59; Sacks *et al.* 1974:730–1). Examples of the kinds of findings made from CA examination of conversational data include sequencing in conversational openings and closings (Schegloff 1968; Schegloff and Sacks 1973); the notion of paired actions or 'adjacency pairs', such as question–answer, summons–answer, and greeting–greeting; and the finding that what had previously been regarded as 'empty' talk (words or expressions such as 'oh', 'well', 'uh huh' or 'hm mm') was ordered in its occurrence (Heritage 1984a; Schegloff 1982).<sup>14</sup> Institutional talk investigates how institutions are 'talked into being' (Heritage 1984b:290; Schegloff 1992a).

A fundamental set of 'grossly apparent facts' has been observed for ordinary conversation. These were outlined in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) paper, 'A simplest systematics for the organization of turn taking in conversation'. As these facts also form the basis of other turn-taking systems, such as interviews, they are listed here:

1. Speaker-change recurs, or at least occurs...
2. Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time...
3. Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief...
4. Transitions (from one turn to a next) with no gap and no overlap are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions...
5. Turn order is not fixed, but varies...

---

<sup>13</sup> Ten Have (1999:8) refers to 'ordinary conversation' and 'institutional talk' as 'pure' and 'applied' CA, respectively. See also the review by Goodwin and Heritage (1990).

<sup>14</sup> Some linguists have called these 'fillers' or, as Schegloff (1982:74) observes, 'conversational "detritus" apparently lacking semantic content, and not contributing to the substance of what the discourse ends up having said'.

6. Turn size is not fixed, but varies...
7. Length of conversation is not specified in advance...
8. What parties say is not specified in advance...
9. Relative distribution of turns is not specified in advance...
10. Number of parties can vary...
11. Talk can be continuous or discontinuous...
12. Turn-allocation techniques are obviously used. A current speaker may select a next speaker (as when he addresses a question to another party); or speakers may self-select in starting to talk...
13. Various 'turn-constructual units' are employed; e.g., turns can be projectedly 'one word long', or they can be sentential in length...
14. Repair mechanisms exist for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations; e.g., if two parties find themselves talking at the same time, one of them will stop prematurely, thus repairing the trouble...(Sacks *et al.* 1974:700–1)

### 1.3.1 *CA and institutional talk*

In the CA study of institutional talk, the purpose is to apply the principles of CA to institutional interactions that constitute the stuff of daily business. In this sense, also, CA has something to offer those for whom the study of institutions is important.

Wherever else we might locate '(the) society,'—the economy, the polity, the law, the organized systems for the reproduction of the population and the membership of the society, etc.—the organization of persons dealing with one another in interaction is the vehicle through which those institutions get their work done. On these and other grounds, interaction and talk-in-interaction merit recognition as a strategic locus of the social (Schegloff 1986:112).

Three decades of research using CA have resulted in a growing body of studies in institutional settings (Atkinson 1982; Boden 1994; Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Drew and Heritage 1992b; Schegloff 1992a; ten Have 1999:Ch.8). These studies have occurred particularly within the various fields and sub-fields of sociology: medical sociology (Frankel 1990, 1984a, 1984b; Heath 1986; Heath 1992; ten Have 1991); deviance and criminology (Drew 1985; Komter 1998; Maynard 1984; Meehan 1989; Pollner 1979; Watson 1990); the sociology of science and technology (Button and Sharrock 1995); and the sociology of children (Goodwin 1990) and education (McHoul 1978; Mehan 1979, 1985). It has also been adopted as a method in various other fields, such as anthropology (Moerman 1988), social psychology (Antaki and Rapley 1996), counselling (Peräkylä 1995), and communication research (Hopper 1992; Nevile 2001). These are but a few examples of a rapidly growing field.

This research has shown that a range of different turn-taking systems exists for a range of human social activities such as debates, meetings, therapy sessions, medical consultations, trials and press conferences, as well as ‘ordinary’ conversation (Sacks *et al.* 1974:729). As conversation is ‘a vehicle for interaction between parties with any potential identities, and with any potential familiarity’ (Sacks *et al.* 1974:700), some aspects of an interaction system must remain ‘context-free’ and ‘context-sensitive’, and hence, as Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:8) observes, potentially ambiguous. Institutional talk has been shown to rely on many of the practices and principles of ordinary conversation but also to impose certain constraints in order to accomplish the specific task it undertakes. Each genre has its special characteristics, but a turn-taking system is still ‘massively present’ (Sacks *et al.* 1974:729).

A body of other work in CA focuses specifically on interaction in interviews in particular institutional or organisational settings (Button 1987a; Heritage 1994), including news interviews (Clayman 1992; Greatbatch 1992; Heritage 1985), political interviews (Bramley 1997), job interviews (Collins 1997; Komter 1991) and survey interviews (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2000, 2002; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki 1997; Houtkoop-Steenstra and van den Bergh 2000; Maynard *et al.* 2002; Maynard and Schaeffer 1997; Mazeland and ten Have 1998; Schaeffer 1991a; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Schober and Conrad 1997, 2002; Suchman and Jordan 1990a). CA research shows that talk in interviews relies heavily on the practices and principles of ordinary conversation (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:viii; Sacks *et al.* 1974; Schaeffer 1991a; Schegloff 1992a, 2002; Schober and Conrad 2002; Suchman and Jordan 1990a). The next section focuses on CA work on standardised survey interviews, as an introduction to the concern in this thesis with a particular kind of standardised survey interview, the demographic survey interview.

### **1.3.2 CA and standardised survey interviews**

Standardised survey interviews have become a topic of interest in the CA literature on institutional talk since the early 1990s. Evidence of the growth of interest in how standardised survey interviews work has been the inclusion of sessions on standardised survey interviews in recent international conferences and workshops. The International Conference on CA in 2002 (ICCA-2002) in Copenhagen has one of its 18 panel sessions devoted to this topic. Houtkoop-Steenstra’s work has been groundbreaking in this field of CA research, as evidenced by the list of publications

above. In the area of demography, the work of Schaeffer and her colleagues (Maynard *et al.* 2002; Schaeffer 1991a; Schaeffer 1991b; Schaeffer and Maynard 1996; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Schaeffer and Thomson 1992) on some aspects of interaction in demographic surveys has been outstanding as the sole contribution from the discipline.

Much of the work on standardised survey interviews also concerns telephone interviewing as increasing numbers of surveys these days, at least in industrialised countries, take place over the telephone (Frey and Oishi 1995:4; Stewart and Cash 1991). Very little work has been done, however, on cross-cultural standardised survey interviews; the contribution by Gumperz (1992) in Drew and Heritage's (1992b) collection, *Talk at Work*, stands out here as an initial exploration of this area of research.

CA work on survey interviews, through the minute detail of its transcription practices, offers empirical precision lacking in other approaches to the analysis of survey interviews. Most models, such as the symbolic interactionist model advocated by Foddy (1993:20–3), formulate theory which then must be substantiated by data.<sup>15</sup> CA formulates no theory in advance; rather, it takes the minutiae of interaction as its starting point and seeks patterns from the data. Suchman and Jordan (1990a) have already demonstrated the power of even a simplified type of CA transcription to portray interaction in the five survey interviews constituting the data for their study.<sup>16</sup> Bailey's (1982:286) chapter on ethnomethodology in *Methods of Social Research* elaborates the special advantage of CA in making visible the process by which numerical responses are negotiated. Bailey (1982:299–300) notes that although ethnomethodology is often omitted from discussions of traditional research methods, it fills an important gap left by these methods:

Not only does ethnomethodology concentrate on process and on the way everyday matters are made sense of by participants in social interaction (thus covering a topic neglected by other methods), it also treats other methods themselves as phenomena to be studied, and in so doing provides us with important insights regarding such matters as the clarification of ambiguous survey questions and the reliability of coding survey data (Bailey 1982:300).

---

<sup>15</sup> See Cicourel (1982) for an exploration of the relevance of some of these models.

<sup>16</sup> Suchman and Jordan's (1990a) study uses video-tapes because the interviews were face-to face interviews. For telephone interviews audio-tapes are appropriate.

Bailey (1982:284–5) argues that ethnomethodology and other data collection methods are complementary, with fundamentally different attitudes to knowledge:

One radical difference is that almost all of the other methods used in standard social science treat commonsense knowledge as different from social science knowledge. Standard social science tends to emphasize this difference by contending that ‘scientific’ knowledge is ‘superior’ to commonsense knowledge. Ethnomethodology fills a gap by emphasizing the similarity between social science methods and lay methods. While other methods see commonsense knowledge as inferior knowledge generated by inferior methods, ethnomethodology seeks to understand the way in which members of society use the practices of commonsense reasoning not only to make sense of their world but even to construct and perpetuate the ongoing social world.

Houtkoop-Steenstra’s (2000) study is the first detailed and comprehensive study of the standardised survey interview using CA.<sup>17</sup> Houtkoop-Steenstra demonstrates empirically how, in standardised interviewing, normal conversational rules are compromised to the detriment of the data obtained in the survey interview. Interview data can, therefore, be understood only as a product of the interview interaction. It cannot be assumed, according to Houtkoop-Steenstra, that they are a clear and unmediated expression of the respondent’s views or situations.

As Cleland, Johnson-Acsadi and Marckwardt (1987:47) point out, ‘As usual in matters of questionnaire content, it is easier to be critical than constructive’. Houtkoop-Steenstra adopts a pragmatic view of the implications for survey research:

modern society cannot and will not do away with this efficient and relatively inexpensive measurement instrument. We should therefore try to improve its quality (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:12).

Recent research on standardised research interviews has begun to focus on a wider range of issues. Moore’s (1999a) doctoral research, for example, addressed the issue of how interviewer and respondent understand each other in standardised interviews: the issue of ‘intersubjectivity’ (Schegloff 1992b).

A consistent focus in CA research on standardised interviews has been turn taking and turn allocation, two of the components of a turn-taking system that are likely to be different in an interview compared with ‘ordinary’ conversation (Sacks *et al.* 1974). Speaker turns are likely to be different because there are restrictions on who may

---

<sup>17</sup> As I am revising this thesis for submission, another important cross-disciplinary volume edited by Maynard *et al.* (2002) has been added to the body of research on standardised survey interviews, unfortunately, too late for detailed inclusion. Some of the chapters included have been referred to in their draft form through this thesis. They are referred to as chapters of the book rather than as preliminary papers or drafts, the form in which I read them.

speak, when, and for how long they may speak, and in what order they may speak. Topics also are to a greater or lesser degree predetermined, depending on whether the interview is structured, semi-structured or unstructured. In all types of interviews, questions of various types—open, closed, field-coded, or probing—have a central role.

As mentioned earlier, demographers and other social science researchers are more often concerned with the question of meaning than with the nature of interaction in interviews. CA takes the following approach to questions of meaning:

Questions of meaning are generally answered by strict reference to the actual course of interaction by observing what happens first, second, next, etc., by noticing what preceded it; and by examining what is actually done and said by the participants (Psathas and Anderson 1990:13).

Researchers may rely on their native knowledge to interpret meaning, but this can be misleading. For example, what appears to the observer to be a ‘question’ may not be followed by an ‘answer’:

If a prior utterance is not responded to as a question, its meaning for the parties is to be found in what they actually do next. The question may not have been heard, or may have been misunderstood or evaded. An answer may have been delayed. Or the question may be responded to as an invitation in the form of a question. As an invitation, the next turn may display an acceptance or declination. Or the utterance may be heard as a compliment ... and responded to with a return compliment....The key issue is to examine how members themselves make sense of what is said. Thus meanings are seen to be contingent, locally accomplished, situated, and conventional (Psathas 1995:52).

This raises the vital and thorny issue of standardisation, and the related concepts of reliability and validity. The assumption of survey researchers has been that fully scripted identical questions, delivered exactly as worded by trained interviewers, will result in consistency in responses. These responses can then be related to the characteristics of the respondent rather than the characteristics of the interviewer or interviewing procedure and thus subjected to statistical analysis on that basis. Thus, the ‘key defining part of a measurement process is standardisation’ (Fowler and Mangione 1990:14). The implication is ‘that standardized question wording and standardized meaning go together’ (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:8): that if questions are fully scripted and delivered in an identical fashion, their meaning will also be identical for each individual respondent. The idea that standardisation of question wording does not imply standardisation of meaning is not new, as Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:3,8) points out. Houtkoop-Steenstra (1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2000) and others (Maynard and Schaeffer 1997; Schaeffer 1991a; Schaeffer and Maynard



1996; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Suchman and Jordan 1990a) have shown that the response expectations created by scripted survey questions in general run counter to what the designers of surveys might expect, but ‘Standardisation is, after all, the heart of survey methodology and market research, and for that reason it would not be easy to give it up’ (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:9). Maynard *et al.*’s (2002) contribution to this area of research is welcomed.

#### 1.4 The context and objectives of this research

This research addresses the concerns raised in this chapter so far. It takes the context of an Australian longitudinal survey, *Negotiating the Life Course*, to examine interaction in standardised telephone survey interviews over questions related to having children. The concern with Australian women’s fertility decisions is a serious and current concern of Australian demography (Abbasi-Shavazi 1998; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1999; Hakim 2001; Kippen and McDonald 1998; McDonald 1998, 2000a, 2000b; McGuinness 2000; *Weekend Australian* 2001:19–30). In line with the CA principle of ‘unmotivated looking’ (Psathas 1995:45) the research has one simple objective: to transcribe and analyse interaction in a set of standardised demographic survey interviews with women about having children, using the methods of CA in order to ascertain whether such analysis might offer a useful perspective to demographers in examining methods of data collection.

What CA is expected to bring to demographers’ understanding of interviews is a finely tuned focus on interaction. Without such a focus to view interaction, demographers have a survey instrument—representing the (usually) absent researcher—and the participants: interviewer and respondent. Each element can be examined separately by other means, but there is no way of bringing the elements together. Foddy (1993:11) comes very close to a CA perspective on interaction when he suggests: ‘We must come to grips with the idea that all of these elements somehow constitute a dynamic, interrelated set of elements.’ Maynard *et al.* (2002:xi) make the following points about cross-disciplinary collaboration:

Collaborations across disciplines are likely to be the most productive when kindred problems are of keen mutual interest, when the same data are mutually workable, and when the relevance and insights of distinct methodologies are mutually appreciated. Interdisciplinary collaborations are risky, however, because one party’s jargon may seem overblown and its findings obvious to the other. Or misunderstandings may occur because the two parties have starkly different ways of thinking about, theorizing and studying phenomena. However, when both parties take the risk, put aside stereotypes of the other’s

work, and attempt to enter research worlds different from their own, the fruits can be rich and plentiful.

When viewing this current research, as with most cross-disciplinary research, readers from such different disciplinary traditions as CA and demography will require patience with each other's approaches and methodologies. The detailed CA transcription system may take some time to become familiar to demographers; and the macro-scale concerns of demographers may frustrate analysts of talk-in-interaction who maintain the importance of remaining close to their data.

Chapter 2 outlines the sources of survey interview data—*Negotiating the Life Course* and the *Women on Children* Survey derived from it—and the CA approach to analysis of interview data in this research. This is followed by Chapter 3, which explicates CA concepts useful in the analysis of standardised survey interviews using examples from the interview data. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the interviews, using transcribed interview data to focus on how the questions are asked and answered. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are the main analytical chapters of this research, focusing on questions asked in the survey interviews. They deal, respectively, with three issues of particular interest to demographers: the likelihood of a future birth; the timing of the first child; and attitudes to the value of children. The thesis concludes with implications for demographic surveys and future research.

## Sources of interview data and approaches to analysis

---

This chapter has two aims. First, it describes the sources of data used to examine interaction in survey interviews with women about having children and discusses the way in which interview data were collected. The second aim is to discuss the approach in this research to the analysis of interaction in interviews, using conversation analysis (CA). Methodological considerations in choice and use of data sources and the selection of respondents are also discussed.

### 2.1 Sources of interview data

Data for this research come from *Negotiating the Life Course* (NLC), an Australia-wide telephone survey (Section 2.1.1 below), implemented as part of the Life Course Project. The core data for this study are tapes, transcripts and coded questionnaires from 27 short telephone interviews with a subset of NLC respondents. These 27 interviews are hereafter referred to as the *Women on Children* (WOC) Survey. Three supporting data sources are used: information collected on the total NLC sample of 2,231 for Wave 1 of the NLC in 1997; tapes of pre-calls with the 27 WOC respondents; and audio-tapes and transcripts of in-depth interviews with three of the 27 respondents. Information on sources of data, types of interview, interviewers, and respondents is set out in Table 2.1.

#### 2.1.1 NLC Survey data

NLC is a 10-year longitudinal survey initiated by demographers, economists and sociologists in the Research School of Social Sciences (RSSH) of the Australian National University. The survey is described as follows:

Negotiating the Life Course is designed to study the changing life courses and decision-making processes of Australian men and women as the family and society move from a male breadwinner orientation in the direction of higher levels of gender equity. ... The project has six main aims:

Table 2.1 Sources of data, interviewer and respondent details for this research

Data source	How was it administered?	How was it monitored?	Who recorded the data?	How many questions (duration)?	How many and who were the respondents?	Who was the interviewer?	Where were the respondents from?
1. <i>Negotiating the Life Course (NLC) Survey Wave 1 1997</i>							
Interviewer comments	Notes at time of interview	Notes	Interviewer	NA	NA	AIFS interviewers	Australia-wide
Structured questionnaire (all)	CATI	Coded questionnaires (no audio-tapes)	Interviewer	About 299 questions (about 40 minutes)	2,231 male and female respondents in total	AIFS interviewers	Australia-wide
2. <i>Women on Children (WOC) Survey (Sample of NLC Wave 1 respondents) 1998/9</i>							
Pre-call	By telephone	Audio-tape	MM	NA	25 women from NLC Wave 1	MM	NSW, ACT
Structured questionnaire (part)	By telephone	Audio-tape	AI	About 10 questions (4–15 minutes)	27 women aged 20–54 interviewed in NLC Wave 1 and WOC	AI	NSW, ACT
In-depth interviews	Face-to-face	Audio-tape	MM	Variable	3 women aged 15–49 interviewed for NLC Stage 1 and WOC	MM	NSW, ACT

Notes: AI Annie (Pseudonym for AIFS interviewer). ACT Australian Capital Territory. AIFS Australian Institute of Family Studies. CATI Computer-assisted telephone interviews. MM Marian May. NA Not applicable. NSW New South Wales. UQ University of Queensland.

- to extend the theories of human capital and new home economics in explaining women's and men's labour force participation;
- to map women's and men's work trajectories over their life course, from career entry into retirement, and to develop explanatory models of career trajectories;
- to identify those aspects of the family-household system and the labour market that facilitate or impede women's involvement with the labour market;
- to investigate the interrelationships between labour force decisions and decisions about family formation and household arrangements;
- to identify the portfolio of resources that women and men draw upon throughout their lives when making decisions about career and family; and
- to assess the policy implications of the findings of the project for the institutions of the welfare state, the labour market and the family (RSSS 1998:13-14).

The first wave of the NLC Survey was completed in early 1997. Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), drawing on a random telephone sample from the White Pages (electronic version), were conducted with 2,231 people aged 18 to 54 years, living in Australia. Of those interviewed in Wave 1 NLC, 984 were men and 1,247 were women. Of these respondents, around 98 per cent agreed to continue to participate in later waves of the survey. The second and third waves were envisaged after three and six years in 2000 and 2003, respectively. Interviewers for Wave 1 NLC were those employed by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) in Melbourne for a concurrently running survey.

Wave 1 interviews collected full relationship, fertility, work and education histories of the respondents, as well as parental background characteristics, extensive information on current working arrangements for the respondent and partner, child care, household tasks, future plans and value orientations (RSSS 1998:14). The Wave 1 NLC interviews provide baseline background information on respondents useful for the WOC study.

Wave 2 interviews were conducted from April to July 2000, using interviewers and facilities at the University of Queensland. As a result of experience in Wave 1, some questions were changed for Wave 2, including some of the questions on children. I sought and was given permission to tape-record Wave 2 interviews with WOC respondents as an additional source of data. However, although the interviews were tape-recorded, the data were not used in this research.

Those initially contacted for NLC by telephone who were considered to have a 'language difficulty' were dropped from the survey and could not be followed up (174 people or two per cent of attempted interviews throughout Australia). This 'language difficulty' could be the result of a number of situations: for example, the language of interview may not have been the first language of the respondent or the respondent may have had a speech impediment or disorder. Those whose grasp of English was not adequate for the situation (an interview over the telephone) were omitted from the NLC Survey. In particular, this is likely to mean recent immigrants, particularly women, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (McRobbie and Jupp 1993:4–5). The AIFS Interviewer Manual (AIFS 1998:41) gives extensive coverage to the issue of 'language difficulty'.

### **2.1.2 WOC Survey data**

Wave 1 NLC had already been completed when I was looking for interview data for this research. So, to obtain a corpus of data on interview interaction, 27 women from Wave 1 NLC were re-interviewed using a small section of the Wave 1 NLC questionnaire—the questions about having children. These 27 women constitute the sample for the WOC Survey. A small sample is unusual in demographic surveys. However, Suchman and Jordan (1990a) used five interviews to study interaction in survey interviews, and Schaeffer and Thomson (1992) used 18 respondents for semi-structured interview in examining types of uncertainty when asking women about wanting children.

A profile of the 27 women is given in Table 2.2. To obtain this sample, women aged 20–54 years were randomly chosen from the 400 Wave 1 NLC respondents living in New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The purpose in selection of the respondents was to include women of various ages and from various stages of the life course who lived in rural and urban areas. Only ACT and NSW respondents were chosen for in-depth interviews so that these respondents would be reasonably accessible.

Of the 25 women initially selected on a random basis from the Wave 1 NLC sample of 400 women, eight had changed their telephone number since the Wave 1 survey but were still able to be contacted. Six of the 25 women were replaced: one was

Table 2.2 Characteristics of WOC Survey sample, 1998

WOC ID No.	Pseudonym	Age <sup>a</sup>	Living with partner <sup>b</sup>	Completed secondary education <sup>c</sup>	Children ever born	Total children <sup>d</sup>	How many more children? <sup>e</sup>	State or territory
1	Annegret	34	Yes	Yes	1	2	1	NSW
2	Lyn	38	No	Yes	2	2	0	ACT
3	Chrissy	46	Yes	Yes	0	0	0	NSW
4	Andrea	35	Yes	Yes	2	3	1	NSW
5	Tonia	30	Yes	Yes	3	4	1	ACT
6	Kristen	43	Yes	No	2	3	1	NSW
7	Sonya	27	No	Yes	3	3	0	ACT
8	Dale	31	Yes	No	0	1	1	NSW
9	Jess	35	No	Yes	0	2	2	NSW
10	Joanne	49	Yes	Yes	4	4	0	NSW
11	Ricky	38	No	Yes	2	2	0	NSW
12	Tina	35	No	Yes	0	1	1	NSW
13	Merilyn	48	Yes	No	3	3	0	NSW
14	Noelle	37	Yes	Yes	2	2	0	NSW
15	Carol	36	Yes	Yes	2	2	0	NSW
16	Melinda	38	No	No	2	2	0	NSW
17	Edith	42	Yes	Yes	4	4	0	NSW
18	Coral	36	Yes	Yes	2	2	0	NSW
19	Karen	35	Yes	Yes	3	3	0	NSW
20	Liz	50	Yes	No	2	2	0	NSW
21	Nadia	54	No	No	3	3	0	NSW
22	Helen	47	Yes	No	4	4	0	NSW
23	Jenny	37	Yes	Yes	4	4	0	NSW
24	Kerry	54	No	No	4	4	0	NSW
25	Beverly	47	No	Yes	0	0	0	ACT
26	Lindy	50	Yes	Yes	2	2	0	NSW
27	Debra	46	Yes	No	4	4	0	NSW

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Age at time of Wave 1 NLC (respondents were approximately two years older by the time of the WOC telephone interview). <sup>b</sup> Relationship status: 1 'not in cohabiting relationship'; 2 'in cohabiting relationship' (includes 'married'). <sup>c</sup> Educational level (secondary only): 1 'completed secondary'; 2 'incomplete secondary'. <sup>d</sup> Total number of children respondent thinks she will have in the future plus children already born when asked in 1997. The questions asked were: 'How many children have you ever had?' and 'How many (more) children do you think you will have in the future?'. <sup>e</sup> Number of additional children respondent thought she would have in the future when asked in 1997, in response to the question, 'How many (more) children do you think you will have in the future?'.

Source: NLC 1997.

overseas; one had left no contact details when she left her partner; one refused because she had a visitor; in one case no-one answered the telephone after numerous call-backs; and in the remaining two cases a recorded message from the telephone company informed me that the number could not be connected. If a respondent was unable to be contacted after at least three attempts over three days or not able to take part for some reason, the adjacent ID number (first preceding then, if still unsuccessful in making contact, subsequent) on the list of 400 women from NSW and the ACT was chosen. Two extra respondents were included in case of unforeseen problems during the telephone interviews, such as technical difficulties with recording, resulting in a total sample of 27. Given the readiness of the women to participate, this number was expected to yield 10 in-depth interviews without difficulty; that is, I expected that of the 27 women, 10 would agree to participate in a further interview.<sup>18</sup>

Two characteristics of the sample are worthy of particular note. First, none of the women eventually contacted was from a language background other than English. One woman, 'Jess', was an Aboriginal Australian, but English was her first language. It is possible that some women were eliminated because of 'language difficulty' or 'disability' before Wave 1 interviews were conducted, as 29 of the 174 attempts made throughout Australia but abandoned for this reason were from NSW. This reasoning is supported by my experience during the Wave 2 NLC interviews in 2000. Some interviewers found interviews with respondents with languages other than English who were still in the survey much more difficult to complete than those with native English speakers. This was evidenced by the longer duration of the interviews and the interviewers' audible exasperation at having to repeat and explain questions and wait for responses. Such interviews required extended de-briefing with supervisors, and some interviewers voiced their dissatisfaction.<sup>19</sup>

The second characteristic worthy of note is that the WOC sample contains a large number of older women—10 of the 27 were over 45 years of age when interviewed for

---

<sup>18</sup> Coombs and Freedman's (1964) respondents in telephone interviews on fertility issues reacted very favourably to re-interview. Nearly all remembered the first interview and many expressed pleasure at being contacted again (Coombs and Freedman 1964:116). The sensitive issues of fertility did not seem to create any obstacles.

<sup>19</sup> See Keats (2000:Ch.12) for an extended discussion of interviewing people with disabilities and pp. 81–4 for a discussion of cross-cultural research.



Wave 1 NLC Survey in 1996–7. Chance appears to be the only explanation for this. At first it was thought that this bias was because the WOC sample was drawn after the samples for other studies using NLC respondents at the same time. Those samples, of mostly younger respondents, were thought to have been excluded before the WOC sample was drawn, because of the concern that respondents would be over-exposed to interviewing. However, the WOC sample was drawn from the complete NLC population. Most of the women in the sample did not want to have more children. In 1997 five of the women (Beverly, Chrissy, Dale, Jess and Tina) had no children. By the end of 1998 Jess and Dale had had their first children.

#### 2.1.2.1 *Initial telephone contact with WOC respondents: the pre-call*

In early December 1998, after Human Research Ethics Committee clearance for the study, respondents were first approached by telephone to enlist their participation in the WOC Survey. I made initial introductory telephone calls to the first 25 women to ascertain whether they would be willing to participate in two interviews further to their previous participation in Wave 1 NLC 18 months to two years before. They were asked to take part first in a short telephone interview, re-asking the questions on children that they had been asked in the 1997 Wave 1 NLC Survey, and, second, in a face-to-face interview to follow up these same questions in greater depth. Despite having been asked nearly 300 questions over the telephone earlier for the Wave 1 NLC, many of the women said that they did not recall having been interviewed. The vast majority was happy to be interviewed again, even though for many it was a busy time just before Christmas. During the pre-call or during a call a few days later, all women provided times when they could most easily be contacted for the telephone interview.

During the pre-call, I first went through an introductory checklist with each of the WOC respondents (Appendix 1). This included the following items: seeking permission to tape the pre-call and subsequent interview, giving the name and credentials of the interviewer, explaining the purpose of the study, setting out what would be required of the respondent, asking the respondent to specify a good time within the three days set aside for the short telephone interviews, giving an assurance of confidentiality, and reminding the respondent that she could end the interview at any time. I gave respondents telephone numbers to contact me if the need arose.

Several women expressed their satisfaction at having contact with me, the researcher, and being able to ask questions about the nature of the study; some asked to be informed about the results. What was intended to be a short introductory call became, in three cases, a discussion on social research, as three of the respondents volunteered that they had been involved in survey research or had worked for a polling company. These discussions, then, did not need to take place during the interviews themselves, allowing them to be completed more efficiently. Asking the respondent to specify a good time to call her on the three days set aside for the short telephone interviews meant that the interviews mostly happened at a time that suited the respondent. It was also possible to verify contact details. Finally, I was able to test the technology for recording telephone interviews, although not in the setting in which the interviews would eventually take place. The taped material from the pre-calls provides some useful material to supplement other sources of data.

#### 2.1.2.2 *WOC Survey telephone interviews*

Short telephone interviews were conducted over three days at the AIFS in Melbourne in December 1998, using one of the original interviewers from Wave 1 NLC. The following sections address considerations in the choice of interviewer for the WOC Survey, the questions used, and the way in which the telephone interviews were conducted.

##### *Choice of interviewer*

I decided to use only one interviewer, as the interviews were short, covering only about 10 questions, not many in total. Although in terms of conventional survey methodology use of one interviewer maximises interviewer bias, it also shows more clearly how different respondents interact with the same interviewer and the same questions on children. Thus, using one interviewer maintains a focus on the respondents and their views rather than introducing interviewer variability. The considerable research already conducted on interviewer behaviour suggested no strong reason to use more than one interviewer for such a small number of interviews (Cannell and Oksenberg 1988; Clark and Schober 1992; Dijkstra and van der Zouwen 1987; Fowler and Mangione 1986; Fowler and Mangione 1990; Hagenaars and Heinen 1982; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995,

1996, 1997a, 1997b; Houtkoop-Steenstra and van den Bergh 2000; Schober and Conrad 1997; Sudman and Bradburn 1982; van der Zouwen *et al.* 1991). Some of these studies have already demonstrated interviewer behaviour across multiple interviewers.

The chosen interviewer, given the pseudonym ‘Annie’, was considered one of the most experienced, best trained, and most competent contract interviewers in Wave 1 NLC;<sup>20</sup> she was also a supervisor of interviewers and was suggested by the AIFS co-ordinator as the best available for the task. She met Frey and Oishi’s (1995:110–17) criteria for a good interviewer, according to the categories of role, ability and knowledge. This point is particularly important in interpreting the findings of the analytical chapters of this thesis, as it might be concluded from some of the excerpts from interviews that she was not a good interviewer. She frequently broke the rules of standardised interviewing outlined in the AIFS manual for CATI (AIFS 1998). However, research on the conduct of survey interviews shows that, in practice, it is impossible for interviewers to behave as survey designers and trainers of interviewers might expect (e.g., Briggs 1986:Ch.3; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 1996, 2000; Mazeland and ten Have 1998; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Suchman and Jordan 1990a). This issue is followed up in subsequent chapters.

Before the WOC interviews a briefing with Annie covered the questions to be asked, information on respondents’ preferred calling times and taping procedures. As Annie had been a Wave 1 NLC interviewer, she was already familiar with the procedure for the introduction, questions, wordings and prompts used for the WOC Survey. My initial calls had established a rapport with the respondents such that a subsequent interview with me might have seemed too formal a forum for discussing the questions on children contained in the questionnaire. The AIFS interviewer was able to complete the interviews in an efficient, formal and more detached manner.

---

<sup>20</sup> According to the trainers of interviewers for the NLC Survey, the interviewers selected had an interest in social research and were given more extensive and expensive training than usual. Rewards were evident in terms of lower refusal rates. Training emphasised the importance of the introduction to the interview and of informing respondents on the length of the interview (AIFS 1998). Considerable detail was provided to interviewers on the researchers, and the purpose and value of the study (H. Glezer, S. Kellman, personal communications, 2000).

### *The questions*

The NLC Wave 1 questionnaire comprised a total of roughly 300 questions, covering many aspects of work and family life. The questions relating to children amounted to about 10 questions in the middle of the questionnaire, starting with Question 154. At the end of the questionnaire a final question relating to children (Question 277) was asked in a series of questions on the importance of respondents' achieving particular objectives in the next three years. One of these objectives concerned having a child or another child. The WOC survey re-asked the questions from the middle of the Wave 1 NLC questionnaire but did not re-ask Question 277. Questions asked in the WOC Survey are in Appendix 2.

The WOC women, then, had already answered the 10 WOC questions earlier when they participated in the Wave 1 NLC telephone interview. My concern that repeating the questions might affect their responses to the WOC questions was allayed by the fact that few women remembered being interviewed for Wave 1 NLC.

### *The telephone interviews*

Interviews took place using a taping device linking the telephone to a cassette recorder. Instead of coding the responses using CATI technology (as was the case with Wave 1 NLC), the interviewer coded immediately onto the questionnaires. This was less cumbersome for such a short interview. Responses were coded according to the Wave 1 guidelines. I monitored calls from the supervisor's office in the way that a supervisor would routinely monitor interviews. This gave me a sense of immediacy that would not have been possible from replaying the tapes. In taping the interviews one particular difficulty arose: the CATI system normally used at the AIFS was not geared for simultaneous taping, and the quality of the interviewer's voice suffered in some instances. The background noise of the air-conditioning system at times interfered with recording of the interviewer's voice, making the audio-recording soft and often difficult to transcribe with accuracy. However, because I was present at the AIFS when the telephone interviews were conducted, any problems that arose in taping, timing of calls or replacement of respondents could be addressed.

Some awkwardness resulted from using only a part of the Wave 1 questionnaire. The end of the interview came very suddenly. From the comments and tone of voice of some respondents, it appeared that they were almost disappointed that the interview had come to an end. As the interviews progressed, I sensed that a telephone interview of this type was not the usual way for women to communicate with each other on the topic of having children. Conversations that women have about relationships, their plans to have another child or not, the reasons for their choices, and the place of children in their lives are often quite personal. They would perhaps more often take place with partners, friends and family, in a less institutional, more everyday, context. At times respondents wanted to elaborate or explain and often alluded to matters that could not be followed up in such an interview.

Respondents were told that I would hold in-depth interviews but not with every respondent, and that selection for in-depth interview would depend on whether they fulfilled the criteria defined after the telephone interviews. A letter was sent to thank respondents after the telephone interviews and to notify those chosen for face-to-face interviewing that I would be contacting them shortly. Section 2.1.2.3 discusses the approach to in-depth interviews.

#### 2.1.2.3 *In-depth interviews*

The third approach to some respondents, then, was my telephone call to arrange for me to conduct an in-depth face-to-face interview. I initially decided to hold in-depth face-to-face interviews with about 10 respondents after the WOC telephone interviews. In practice, only three in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted—with Annegret, Andrea and Dale. It was important that interviews took place as soon as possible after the telephone interview, but this proved difficult for various reasons. At the same time, it was becoming clear also that the data from the telephone interviews alone were more than sufficient for my research.

The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to provide an opportunity for the respondents to tell their own stories in more depth, to clarify any questions that seemed to remain unclear after the telephone interview, and to obtain feedback on the questions

asked.<sup>21</sup> In particular, this meant asking again about how likely the respondent was to have a child in the future, talking more about this, and discussing again the questions on the value of children at the end of the telephone interview. I chose respondents who, in the telephone interview, had expressed uncertainty about having a child in the future, who had fewer than three children or whose story seemed to be interesting in some way. This group comprised six respondents.

The questions used as a starting point for the face-to-face interviews were those in the previous telephone interview. Others, however, arose during the face-to-face interview and were very different for each respondent. For Annegret the decision to have another child and the balance between work and family were topics she wanted to discuss. For Andrea the topics of loving children and being involved in a community were explored in depth. Dale talked a great deal about the decision to have another child in relation to support from her partner and family. Data obtained in the face-to-face interview were compared with coded responses obtained from the earlier telephone interviews with particular focus on the understanding of responses to questions, the quality and type of responses, and the interactions and other factors which might influence the information that emerged.

The face-to-face interviews were audio-taped only. Video-taping was an option, and is advocated by some analysts of talk-in-interaction (see, for example, Goodwin 1979),<sup>22</sup> but I decided against it for three reasons. First, I felt it might be more intrusive than audio-taping when discussing the likelihood of having a child (for Annegret, for example, her difficulty in becoming pregnant was a sensitive matter). Second, the in-depth interviews were planned to be only a supplementary source of data on interaction, secondary to the WOC telephone interviews. Thus, video-taping was an optional extra that might be useful for further analysis but was not vital for the immediate purposes of

---

<sup>21</sup> Krysan (1999) used a similar approach, conducting in-depth interviews to examine how respondents interpreted meaning of two survey questions in US surveys that have been used since the 1960s and 1970s and have undergone considerable quantitative analysis. Stone and Campbell (1984:34) also suggested the strategy of completing again, during an in-depth interview with the same respondents, the same survey form as completed in the initial survey to observe discrepancies.

<sup>22</sup> This is because face-to-face interaction is non-verbal as well as verbal. As ten Have (1999:48) notes, 'The general CA recommendation for making recordings is that these should catch "natural interaction" as fully and faithfully as is practically possible.' If face-to-face interaction is to be caught as fully as possible, non-verbal interaction should then be included.

the study. Third, to transcribe in-depth interviews of around two hours each, using CA transcription conventions (including the transcription required to record the non-verbal features of the interaction), would be a mammoth task and beyond the scope of this research.

Ideally, telephone and in-depth interviews were to take place in quick succession in order to minimise changes that might have taken place in the lives of the respondents. One interview was carried out the day after the telephone interview but this was not possible in the other two cases. In an ideal situation, the Wave 1 NLC telephone interviews completed in 1997 would also have been taped, in order to provide data for an account of the earlier interaction between respondent and interviewer. It is, therefore, beyond the scope of this research to undertake a comprehensive and systematic comparison of telephone interviews with face-to-face interviews, although this would be an interesting exercise. Nevertheless, although limited in number, the three face-to-face interviews are useful as a supplementary source of information to elaborate the respondents' views by telling more of their story.

## **2.2 Methodological considerations in choice and use of data sources and selection of respondents**

Because this research takes an interdisciplinary approach, using CA or talk-in-interaction analysis on demographic survey data, some issues arise that often would not otherwise be issues for demographers or survey researchers. Three issues are discussed below: theoretical considerations in using additional information on respondents from other sources; the phenomenon of observer's paradox and the effect of making an initial call to respondents; and selection of respondents.

The first methodological consideration relates to the use of additional information about survey respondents in this research. Demographers and other social scientists sometimes use ethnographic data obtained from other studies or other methods of data collection to supplement or explain the findings of their research. Conversation analysts differ about the extent to which it makes sense to use additional data as 'background information' to supplement recordings (Heritage 1984b:2–5; Moerman 1988:x, 9ff; ten Have 1999:53ff). In 'pure' CA even the setting in which recordings were made may not always be taken into consideration (ten Have 1999:54); the data are considered to speak

for themselves. Using other data sources, such as ethnographic data, as ‘expressions of opinions and attitudes or descriptions of scenes not witnessed by the researcher’ is open to question, as it is seen as ‘too much a product of the researcher’s or informant’s manipulation, selection, or reconstruction, based on pre-conceived notions of what is probable or important’ (ten Have 1999:53–4).

For the purposes of this study, however, I decided to include some information from the pre-call and the in-depth interviews—audio-taped and partially transcribed (not using CA conventions)—as another source of data. The main reason for this decision was the interdisciplinary nature of the study. Tapes on telephone interaction satisfy the requirements of analysing talk-in-interaction, and tapes of face-to-face in-depth interviews provide another source of information for demographers. These tapes of face-to-face in-depth interviews could be analysed as samples of talk-in-interaction in the same way as the telephone interviews have been analysed, but they do not constitute the core data for the thesis. Some material from the pre-calls and in-depth interviews is used as supporting information, where it elaborates responses given in the previous telephone interview, but only after full analysis of the telephone interview interaction has been completed.

A second methodological issue arising as a result of my intention to conduct the pre-calls and in-depth interviews is that of Labov’s (1972) observer’s paradox. Researchers ideally want to observe interaction as it would have taken place without them. Their presence may influence the interaction, though it is impossible to know what would otherwise have happened (Schiffrin 1994:161; Stubbs 1983:224; ten Have 1999:49). My presence at the AIFS during the WOC telephone interviews also may have affected what occurred. Conducting in-depth face-to-face interviews myself also, after hearing and, in some cases, analysing the telephone interactions, may have meant that my awareness of the interaction issues under study influenced what occurred in the interviews. On the other hand, as a result, I was more familiar with both sets of interview data and the context, interactions and other factors that may have had a bearing on the interviews.



Respondents may also have responded differently, having more knowledge, after the initial telephone call, of the type of research that I was conducting.<sup>23</sup> The language researcher conducting an interview often tells the respondent about the interest in language, but more in terms of the subject matter of the interview and broader social and cultural issues than the specific sociolinguistic goals. Ten Have (1999:49) suggests that ‘in many cases, there does not seem to be a sharp line separating “naturally occurring” from “experimental” data (in the broad sense of “researcher produced”)’. As Schifffrin (1994:159–60) points out, this ‘asymmetric knowledge’ of the purpose of a sociolinguistic interview has an effect on the questions asked. An awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of collecting one’s own data is essential, and these factors are taken into account when the data are analysed.

Selection of respondents is a third methodological consideration that arises in social research of the kind usually conducted by demographers. A useful sample is often drawn from a population to ‘represent a reality that is not directly observable’ (ten Have 1999:50). CA, however, adopts a ‘specimen’ approach to data, where the reality to be studied is directly observable in the specimens at hand.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly:

CA studies are (transcripts of) recordings of episodes of naturally occurring interaction. These are, then, to be considered as *specimens* of their kind, and not, in a *factist* vein, as either *statements about* (as ‘testimonies’) or *reflections of* (as ‘indexes’) a reality ‘out there’ (ten Have 1999:38).

Sampling presupposes a ‘factist’ perspective rather than a specimen approach. In a specimen approach, the reality to be studied can be observed in the ‘specimens’ at hand.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, a CA perspective has certain implications for the current research. Although the WOC respondents were selected randomly, the findings for any group of women selected would just as valid if they had been selected purposively, as is the practice with

---

<sup>23</sup> One study on the effects of introductory calls showed that prior calls had ‘a marked detrimental effect upon the over-all completion rate’ (Brunner and Carroll 1967:653). Another showed that ‘a prior letter does produce a significant reduction in refusals’ (Dillman, Gallegos and Frey 1976:77).

<sup>24</sup> The general way of proceeding for CA is to look for a paradigm case to describe a particular phenomenon. Instances of talk are then analysed as similar or dissimilar to the paradigm. Deviant cases are carefully analysed to ascertain why they do not follow the paradigm. The paradigm is then adjusted as required (Schegloff 1968, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Sacks (1995:Vol.1:Lecture 33, pp.483–8) devotes a lecture, *On sampling and subjectivity*, to this topic.

many other types of qualitative research. CA has already shown that the way in which people organise their talk-in-interaction is orderly (Sacks 1984b; Sacks *et al.* 1974). If the primary focus of the research were to identify the views of a representative sample of women, rather than to examine the interaction over particular questions during the interviews, then a scientific approach to the selection of respondents would be required.

## 2.3 Analysis of interview data

The key to a CA approach to the analysis of data is detailed and systematic transcription of recorded data that makes the data available as directly and as transparently as possible to public scrutiny. Tapes and transcripts constitute a secondary data source (Coates and Thornborrow 1999:594; ten Have 1999) and the only enduring record of the interaction. This section of the chapter outlines the way in which the WOC interview data were transcribed and analysed, with particular reference to issues that arose during the transcription process.

### 2.3.1 *Transcription of interview data*

In order to examine the interaction between respondent and interviewer, the 27 interviews recorded in December 1998 at the AIFS in Melbourne were transcribed in detail, using a version of the set of conversation analytic conventions originally developed by Jefferson (Gardner 1994).<sup>26</sup>

The purpose of this transcription was to record not only *what* was said by participants in the interviews, but *how* it was said, and how the interaction between participants proceeded. Conventional transcriptions of interviews in qualitative research record the words used, omitting or paying minimal attention to what is regarded as extraneous information or noise (ten Have 1999:76). Features such as loudness or softness, changes in pitch, intonation and speed, breathing, laughter and pauses or gaps are generally regarded as unimportant information.<sup>27</sup> CA transcription, however, involves ‘careful,

---

<sup>26</sup> Ten Have (1999) expands on many of the issues in relation to CA transcription that cannot be given extensive coverage here.

<sup>27</sup> Moerman (1988:13) complains: ‘They [transcripts] are ugly to look at and clumsy to handle and refer to. Their splatterings of “l” and “(.)” and “...” would try anyone’s patience and aesthetic sensibilities. But the study of conversation progressively reveals it to be built to very fine metric and scale’.

repeated listening to (and viewing of) recorded interaction in order to make detailed transcriptions of it' (ten Have 1999:75). In some ways, as ten Have (1999:75) has pointed out, CA transcription might best be seen as a translation of the actually produced speech 'into a version of the standardized *language* of that particular community, with some selective indication of the actual speech production'. Edwards and Lampert (1993:3) note the central role of the transcript in discourse research:

When well-suited to the theoretical orientation and research question, the transcript enables the researcher to focus efficiently on the fleeting events of an interaction with a minimum of irrelevant and distracting detail. However, choices made concerning what types of information to preserve (or to neglect), what categories to use, and how to organize and display the information in a written and spatial medium can all affect the impressions the researcher derives from the data.

Various systems for transcription of spoken discourse have been developed, and debate continues. For example, Edwards and Lampert (1993) provide a set of 'diverse, carefully developed and clearly specified systems of transcription and coding, arising from contrasting theoretical perspectives' (Edwards and Lampert 1993:v). Edelsky (1981) suggested the use of a notation system more like a musical score.

The system devised by Jefferson in her work with Sacks remains the basis for most transcription within CA. Individual researchers can and do make additions or adjustments to this system to suit their particular needs. The system I have used in transcribing telephone interviews in this research is a version of Jefferson's system, compiled by Gardner (1994) from Atkinson and Heritage (1984:ix–xvi), Jefferson (1984a:197–216), Sacks *et al.* (1974) and Schegloff's supplementary symbols (Gardner 1994:191). My reasons for this choice were three. First, most CA research on interviews uses some version of the Jefferson system; it makes sense to maintain some consistency among researchers using the same type of data unless there are strong reasons to do otherwise. Second, the design principles of category design, readability and computational tractability (Edwards and Lampert 1993:5) in this system are well suited to the analysis of interview data. Third, the Gardner compilation of Jefferson's principles is neat, complete and concise. I have added some symbols and adapted as necessary in order to reflect occurrences particular to these interviews. A full list of transcription symbols is given in Appendix 3.

With recent developments in sound recording technology, an issue currently under debate is to what extent researchers should make transcriptions from digitised recordings. Some researchers argue that digitised recordings allow greater accuracy, for example in timing of pauses and gaps, than transcription from video- or audio-tapes (Carroll 1999; Moore 1999b; J.Wagner, personal communication, 1998). Others are of the view that such precision is not necessary if the human ear does not normally hear such fine distinctions and if participants do not themselves orient to them (Hutchby 1999). On the other hand, data stored on CD ROM are more easily accessed than data stored on video- or audio-tape.

To allow use of recorded interview segments I transferred the interviews to CD ROM using Realplayer 2. I used CoolEdit 96 to edit soundwaves in sections of some interviews in an attempt to overcome the difficulties at the time of recording. At times this was a successful strategy. Sometimes the sound improved and otherwise inaudible words were audible when the tapes were played on a different tape-player. In any case, it is important to remember that the interview itself is the primary source of data. The recordings are secondary—whether audio-tapes, video-tapes or digital recordings—and the transcripts are tertiary (Moerman 1988:x; ten Have 1999:77–8).

Each WOC interview transcript contains the following information in a separate introductory section, kept confidentially. These items roughly correspond with the list given by ten Have (1999:77), following Psathas and Anderson (1990:80–4). I have added children's details, NLC ID number, duration of the interview and three sections for notes:

- Interview number [MMPH#x]
- Date of interview
- Pseudonym for respondent
- Age of respondent
- NLC ID number
- Pseudonyms for or names of children
- Place of interview
- Pseudonym for interviewer
- Duration of interview (minutes and seconds)
- My notes (initial contact; at time of interview; and at time of transcription)
- Words as spoken
- Sounds as uttered

- Inaudible or incomprehensible sounds or words
- Spaces/silences
- Overlapped speech/sounds
- Pace, stretches, stress, volume, etc.

### 2.3.2 *Issues in transcription of the WOC interviews*

The main consideration in transcribing the WOC telephone interviews was to achieve a transcription format that was easily readable for people not familiar with CA, so that the data were accessible to demographers and others interested in survey research but from a non-CA background. Compromises with a more 'pure' CA transcription are the final result in some segments of interviews quoted in later chapters; however, initially, I took a conventional, detailed CA approach to transcription to ensure as comprehensive an examination as possible.

Interviews were between four and 15 minutes' duration. One minute of interview time took on average about one hour of transcription time; it was slow at first and then became more efficient as I became more familiar with the conventions and processes involved. As I transcribed, various issues arose that required resolution. In particular, these included what to do about instances of poor audio-tape recording; how to handle names and other information in the interviews that might make the respondent identifiable; how to treat the interviewer in transcription; spelling; how to reflect voice quality; and how to handle the timing of pauses, gaps and inaudible talk. The important issue is how an individual transcriber influences the data being transcribed. Schegloff (1992a:133) observes: 'As with all transcripts, the one with which I am working is virtually endlessly revisable'. In all these issues consistency was the aim. Each of these is treated separately below.

#### 2.3.2.1 *Recording quality*

The quality of the recordings of the interviews was sometimes poor, for two reasons. First, as discussed above, background noise and linking to the CATI system resulted in poor-quality recordings. Second, the interviewer's voice was often inaudible. Sometimes this was because her voice naturally dropped considerably at times during the interviews; sometimes it seemed that for some reason the recording favoured the respondent's

voice. Sometimes also there was an unexplained buzz on the line, which affected early recordings.

Very few of the interview tapes were totally audible throughout, partly because of the interviewer's voice levels and partly because of background noise, and more so with some respondents than others. Lindy's interview had more inaudible parts than most. Steps were taken to remedy these problems when they became evident. It did not seem desirable to repeat interviews with these respondents, as their further participation in the NLC survey should not be jeopardised. I also did not want to ask the interviewer to raise her voice, as this seemed undue intervention. It may also be that the lowering of the voice meant something in the interviews and should not be interfered with. There was no obvious technical solution; and I decided this was one of the hazards of working with naturally occurring data.

In transcribing these inaudible parts, I took various courses of action. Where fragments of words or individual words were audible, these were noted within the brackets that indicated that a section was unclear, as provided for by the Jefferson transcription symbols. Where it was clear that the reason for being unclear was the softness of the voice, I used the symbols °xxxxx° and °°xxxxx°° to indicate increasing degrees of softness. Sometimes it was possible to guess what was being said, partly because some words were audible and partly because what the interviewer said was often scripted by the questionnaire. However, even when I was fairly sure what was being said, I enclosed these parts in brackets. In these cases the intonation, pauses and in- and out-breaths were usually missed. It was sometimes annoying that what appeared to be some of Annie's most interesting asides and comments (perceived in terms of how the respondent reacted) were inaudible to me, although apparently not to the respondent.

### 2.3.2.2 *Identifying information*

In the course of the interviews, various pieces of information were given by respondents and the interviewer that could lead to their being recognised. The interviewer and respondents provided their names; respondents provided the names and dates of birth of their children. These details were recorded. In order to abide by the promise of confidentiality to the participants, parts of the recordings that allow identification will

not be played in public. As these parts are usually at the start of the interviews and in the responses to early questions, this does not represent an obstacle to analysis. Segments of the tapes that contain no identifying information can easily be used. Both interviewer and respondents were assigned pseudonyms in the transcripts. If the parts of the transcript where children's names were provided by the respondent are used in the analysis, the pseudonyms chosen for the children are also used.

Pseudonyms were chosen using CA principles, such that in transcription the number of syllables, syllable emphasis and end sound remain the same in order not to change significantly the flow of transcription.<sup>28</sup> Pseudonyms were allocated after the interviews at the time of transcription so that confusion would not arise with names during the interviews. Where the face-to-face interviews were conducted after the interview was transcribed, it was sometimes difficult to revert to the respondent's real name.

#### 2.3.2.3 *The interviewer*

I faced a dilemma as to how to identify the interviewer's turns in the transcripts. For most studies of institutional interaction, participants are given some sort of categorical identification. Watson (1997:51–3 cited in ten Have 1999:80) notes that CA studies of medical interaction between doctors and their patients are in the habit of identifying the participants and labelling their turns in transcriptions of talk as 'Dr' and 'Pt'. Watson argues that this labelling seems to 'instruct' the reader to hear the utterances transcribed as being produced by 'the doctor' and 'the patient' without providing or inviting analysis of the utterances under question. Schegloff (1999:565) argues that the use of such category terms (interviewer/interviewee, doctor/patient, caller/answerer) 'insists into relevance' these categories, making it more difficult for analysts to continually attend to how those participants are 'doing being members of that category.' Not everything that happens in an interview, for example, is 'interviewer talk' or 'respondent talk'. In ordinary conversation, however, Schegloff has used names, wanting to avoid the impersonal.

---

<sup>28</sup> In choosing a pseudonym for the interviewer, I did not follow CA principles as it might have made her easier to identify.

This raises the question of labels for the participants in transcriptions made in this research. The argument could be made that the interviewer should not be identified in terms of her role, as this might prejudice later analysis of the interview. As ten Have (1999:55) comments:

... It should be noted that one might even object, on these grounds, to mentionings of the institutional identities of speakers (such as 'Dr' and 'Pt')...The existence and relevance of such identities are, strictly speaking, to be discovered in the analysis, as products of the local practices of participants...

Should the interviewer be given the identifier 'Annie', according to the same principle whereby the respondents were given their pseudonyms as identifiers? Or should she be given the identifier 'Interviewer' (abbreviated to 'Int'), denoting her role rather than her given name? I did not want to identify the respondents simply as 'Respondent' in all interviews, as it would be impersonal and would not easily allow readers to discriminate among different respondents and different interviews. As individuals they developed a particular character through their interviews. It seemed a pity to sacrifice this identification of their individuality. However, I decided on 'Int' for the interviewer label, rather than 'Annie', mainly because the same interviewer conducted all interviews, and it would eliminate confusion in individual interviews about who was the respondent and who was the interviewer. The main reason is that the purpose of this research is not simply to establish that these data constitute interview data but to allow examination of the interaction between known participants in interviews.

The speed with which Annie delivered her speech posed some difficulties for the transcribing. At the time of the interviews I noted that she normally spoke quite fast compared with the women she was interviewing.<sup>29</sup> It became even clearer in the process of transcribing. To indicate the fast pace would have required very frequent use of the fast speech symbol >xxxxx<, thus cluttering the text with symbols. Instead, I have transcribed normally paced speech for Annie (which might be considered fast for another person) without symbols. Occasionally, I have used >xxxxx< or even >>xxxxx<< to indicate where she is speaking extremely fast. The differences in pace of delivery between Annie and the respondents have implications for how the text is read. Sometimes Annie is able to get in several words very quickly between words produced at

---

<sup>29</sup> McGuire (1985:271) cites research in social psychology that shows that speedier delivery enhances persuasive impact by making the source appear 'more intelligent, more knowledgeable and more sincere'.



a slower pace by the respondent; this may appear to be two turns for the respondent with a turn for Annie in between, whereas on the tape it is only one turn for the respondent. Conventional transcription cannot show this distinction; and it is one reason for Edelsky's (1981) preference for a musical staff transcription system.

Because of the softness of Annie's voice, it was sometimes difficult to determine whether she was speaking or whether there was a pause. I used the notation (<sup>oo</sup>x.x<sup>oo</sup>)—where x represents seconds and parts of seconds—to indicate very quiet inaudible talk that lasted a certain number of seconds. In many instances, Annie's in-breaths and out-breaths have not been recorded. In the occasional very clear interview they were audible, but on the whole they were not. As shown in Chapter 3, in- and out-breaths are an important feature of interaction.

#### 2.3.2.4 *Terminology for respondents, responses and answers*

In this research the term 'respondent' will be used for the person answering the survey interview questions, rather than the term 'participant' or 'informant' favoured by some researchers (see Seidman 1991:8). This term has been chosen because, in standardised interviews, the questioned party is responding to questions from the interviewer (even though she may also ask questions), unlike in other settings, such as in-depth interviews, where the interviewer plays a less overtly directive role.

Throughout this study, the terms 'answer' and 'response' are used to refer to different aspects of the interview, following Houtkoop-Steenstra's (2000:109) distinction between the terms. The term 'answer' refers to what the women say in responding to the interviewer's questions, that is, at the verbal interaction level. "Response", on the other hand, refers to the level of the written interview schedule. Thus, a 'response' is written on the interview schedule according to the pre-determined 'response options' or 'response categories' on the interview schedule. It may take considerable negotiation to move from an 'answer' to a 'response'.

### 2.3.2.5 *Spelling*

Some CA transcriptions use phonetic spelling, particularly where the purpose of the transcription is to examine pronunciation. In the WOC transcriptions I have opted for normal spelling in the vast majority of cases, for reasons of readability for a non-CA-literate audience. Occasionally, where a word is pronounced in a non-standard way, I have used non-standard spelling ('gotta' for 'got to' or 'proibly' for 'probably', for instance) because to use the standard spelling would suggest speech that was too formal in comparison with the tape. Thus, abbreviations are also given in the normal form of an abbreviation: 'ANU' for 'Australian National University' or 'IUD' for 'intra-uterine device' 'UN' for United Nations, rather than the more difficult to decipher 'ay en you', 'eye you dee', or 'you en'.

In Jefferson's system of transcription upper-case letters are generally reserved for indicating that speech is loud. Thus, the initial letter of the first word in a sentence and of proper names would not normally be capitalised; neither would the first-person pronoun, 'i'. I have adopted this convention in most cases. However, where proper names occur (people's names, days of the month, and institutions, for example), I have sometimes retained the initial capital letters, as there can be little confusion with loudness in this case, and the result is a little more readable for those encountering the transcription system for the first time.

### 2.3.2.6 *Voice quality*

Voice quality is difficult to convey in transcription. Symbols have already been incorporated to denote a sympathetic voice (#xxxxx#), a smiling or laughing voice while talking (\$xxxxx\$), and a 'creaky' voice (\*xxxxx\*) (Gardner 1994:188–9). Many types of voice quality assume a particular meaning in conversation that is difficult to pin down precisely in transcription. For example, in several instances Annie comments in a collusive way on what the respondent says, with the expression 'I see', using a voice quality that seems to indicate that there is more to the situation than the respondent mentions and that Annie sees this, notes it, and moves on. It might be transcribed as 'i:: see::,' as opposed to the 'i see.' or 'i see,' but even this is a poor rendition of the spoken

voice. Where relevant, these occurrences are dealt with in the discussion of excerpts from interviews.

#### 2.3.2.7 *Timing of pauses, gaps and inaudible speech*

Pauses in speech may be very significant (Carroll 1999; Jefferson 1989; Sacks *et al.* 1974; ten Have 1999:33). Various methods are used by researchers to time the spaces and silences in spoken interaction.<sup>30</sup> Carroll (1999) notes the two most widely used techniques as, first, the use of a counting mnemonic such as ‘one Mississippi’ or ‘one one thousandth’ and second, the use of a stopwatch. Both have been criticised as inaccurate and inconsistent. Carroll argues that, on the whole, developments in computer software allow much greater precision in measurement of conversational pauses. Debate on this issue continues, however, with some researchers arguing that, as for digital recordings in general, if the human ear cannot detect fine differences in the length of pauses, it does not contribute to our understanding to transcribe in such fine detail.

In the WOC interview transcriptions, I have used the crude mnemonic ‘one thousand, two thousand, three thousand’, where each syllable is roughly equivalent to one-third of a second. If pauses were longer (for example, when respondents interrupted the interview to attend to children or hang up a phone in another room), I used a stopwatch. The counting method may be adequate for the purposes of analysis of these interviews. Although the basis for interviews is question and answer, and the time taken to respond or to ask may be quite significant, the degree of precision given by the methods I used appears to be sufficient for the depth of the analysis.

#### 2.3.2.8 *Influence of the transcriber*

Different transcribers will produce different transcripts. As ten Have notes, transcriptions are:

---

<sup>30</sup> Coates (1996:x) notes: ‘Since pauses of any length seem to be such a rare feature of women friends’ talk, I adopted the simpler system, distinguishing between longer pauses—more than 0.5 of a second—and shorter ones’. Her comments apply to ordinary conversation rather than talk in interviews.

... selective, 'theory-laden' renderings of certain aspects of what the tape has preserved of the original interaction, produced with a particular purpose in mind, by this particular transcriptionist, with his or her special abilities and limitations (ten Have 1999:77).

In the course of transcribing the interviews, I was aware of many decision points. A particular area of difficulty for me seemed to be hearing intonation, even though I played the same excerpt over and over again. The same word could be transcribed with varying intonation at different times, depending on how I heard it at a certain time and according to whether it was heard in context or in isolation. Eventually, I would make a decision, only to change it again later. This phenomenon is noted by many conversation analysts.<sup>31</sup>

Another difficulty was in transcribing emphasis. Some emphasis involves lengthening of sounds, and it was often difficult to decide whether to use underlining for emphasis or colons for lengthening. Sometimes where both lengthening and emphasis seemed relevant I used both.

### 2.3.3 *CA and use of WOC interview data*

In analysis of the WOC interviews, the characteristic method of analysis used in CA is employed. That is, segments from the interviews are introduced to illustrate phenomena arising from the data themselves, as a result of 'unmotivated looking' (Psathas 1995:45). The literature and theory do not determine what is chosen. Thus, each analytical chapter consists mainly of data segments followed by discussion, where comparisons with other research are made. CA is interested in how features of talk-in-interaction regularly occur; that is, it seeks, through inductive procedures, to identify patterns that emerge from the data (Heritage 1988:131). As mentioned in Chapter 1, once a paradigm is established, analysis focuses on the contrast between routine and deviant cases (Sacks 1984b:413; Sacks 1995:483–8).<sup>32</sup>

CA looks for certain conversational features that constitute order in talk-in-interaction, including turn-taking, sequence organisation, repair and construction of turns. These

---

<sup>31</sup> See Ten Have (1999:Ch.5) and Coates and Thornborrow (1999) for full and useful discussions of such transcription issues.

<sup>32</sup> See ten Have (1999:Chs 5, 6) and Silverman (1998:Ch.4) for a summary of these issues.

concepts are elaborated in Chapter 3 in order to provide background to CA concepts needed to analyse the WOC interviews. Chapter 4 gives an overview of the questions asked in the WOC interviews and the interaction that occurred around these questions. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine questions and concepts of interest to the NLC survey designers: the likelihood of having a child in the future, what determined the timing of the respondent's first child or youngest child, and the value of children to these respondents.

The focus in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 is on how respondents and interviewer negotiate responses to the questions through their interaction. Other areas of interest could have been pursued, such as the respondents' reasons for not having another child. However, the three areas chosen raised more issues for respondents in answering the questions and shed more light on the interpretation of concepts of interest to demographers.

## Interaction in standardised survey interviews

---

As a prelude to the analysis of interaction in the *Women on Children* (WOC) interviews, this chapter presents an overview of the main features of interaction in standardised survey interviews as evidenced by and discussed in conversation analysis (CA) research. While CA concepts and terminology are familiar to analysts of talk in interaction, they may not be so familiar to demographers and others conducting surveys. This chapter is designed to provide enough background knowledge for those without a technical CA grounding to grasp the analysis of interview data in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. It is not intended to be a systematic overview of CA research on interviews but rather an overview of features of the WOC interviews that would need extensive, and perhaps therefore distracting, explanation in later chapters. Therefore, in attempting to meet the ‘applied’ needs of demographers, survey researchers and other social scientists—addressing issues of non-sampling error, reliability and validity—such a review may not fully satisfy the technical requirements of ‘pure’ conversation analysts, as many of the phenomena discussed are much more complex than can possibly be demonstrated here.<sup>33</sup> For those designing surveys in the social sciences, however, an understanding of the principles of interaction is a starting point that has been little used.

This chapter addresses the special case of institutional talk in standardised survey interviews, often by reference to the more ‘central’ or ‘basic’ case of ordinary conversation (Sacks *et al.* 1974:701). Four key areas are important to an understanding of the organisation of interaction in any setting (ten Have 1999:111): turn-taking organisation; sequence organisation; the organisation of repair—or what happens when communication goes wrong; and the construction and design of turns between speakers—or ‘recipient design’. Each of these is addressed in the following discussion with reference to organisation of interaction in standardised interviews. Alongside the

---

<sup>33</sup> Ten Have (1999:7–9) elaborates the distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ CA, as outlined in Chapter 1.

four key areas some other CA concepts of particular relevance in interviews are also discussed: formulations; pauses, gaps and lapses; expanded sequences; the concepts of preference and recipient design; affiliation; and frames. Examples are chosen from the WOC interviews.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.1 Turn-taking organisation in standardised interviews

In standardised interviews the basic system of turn taking clearly differs from that of ordinary conversation. Questions and answers are the basis of the interview turn-taking system (the question-answer sequence is the subject of a later section in this chapter). The questions are pre-determined and scripted by a third party to the interaction, the researcher or survey taker. Generally, there are only two participants in the interaction—interviewer and respondent—though the questionnaire is not a neutral force (Goody 1978; Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000), and it can be argued that the researcher or survey taker is present in the form of the questions asked. This is clear from interaction in interviews where the interviewer invokes the writer of the question or distances herself from the question when problems arise, as shown in this excerpt from the WOC interview with Jess:

#### Segment 3.1<sup>35</sup>

199. Jess: mm it's couched in such- it's- it's very- i mean i hate- i  
200. don't mean to be rude but the hh [the w-  
201. Int: [i didn't write the questions

[MMPH#9:199–201]

---

<sup>34</sup> For coverage of interaction in standardised survey interviews using examples from a variety of surveys, see Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000).

<sup>35</sup> Conversation analysts conventionally use Courier font for excerpts of data because, as it is a non-proportional font, the various transcription symbols can be lined up precisely across turns of talk. This is important in the case of overlapped talk, for example, as occurs in lines 200 and 201 of this segment of talk. Overlap is marked by aligned square brackets. With the increasing diversity of word-processing fonts, a wider range of non-proportional fonts is readily available. Arial Monospaced is used for the segments of WOC interviews in this thesis as the letter shape and darker type face are somewhat easier to read than in Courier. Line numbers of segments of talk throughout this thesis may not appear to be continuous for each respondent. This is because the starting line numbers from the original transcript have been used throughout for each segment, despite formatting and font changes.

Interviewers and respondents seem to accept the constraints on turns and turn taking in interviews. That is, respondents generally do not seem to expect to ask a large number of questions, and interviewers do not seem to expect to be questioned very much. Specific 'withholdings' occur (Drew and Heritage 1992a:24); that is, respondents refrain from doing some things that they might do in ordinary conversation. Thus, overall, interviewers ask questions and respondents answer them. Fowler and Mangione (1990:11) stress that 'the presence of highly differentiated roles is a crucial element' of interviews. If the respondent's answer is not formatted appropriately for the available response options, interviewers are required to probe in a neutral way and not to give any evaluation of the response (Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) 1998:23, 28; de Vaus 1995:115; Fowler and Mangione 1990:33; Gorden 1969:212–20; Keats 2000:64–5).<sup>36</sup> When interviews take place over the telephone, certain aspects of the conversational turn-taking system become irrelevant—eye-gaze and gesture, for example.

In interviews, as in other turn-taking systems, speaker change occurs.<sup>37</sup> One way that the respondent can project that it is her turn is when the interviewer finishes asking a question. The way in which listeners project a possible completion point is a complex area of ongoing investigation by CA researchers (e.g., Selting and Couper-Kuhlen 1996).<sup>38</sup> However, it is possible to take a simplistic perspective and thus to give some examples of the way in which a respondent projects the end of a turn, and speaker change occurs. Segments 3.2–5 show how rising and falling intonation, in combination with pragmatic and syntactic features, can indicate points where speaker change may occur.

---

<sup>36</sup> Gorden (1969:212) defines leading questions as follows: 'The term "leading questions" refers to any question, including its context and answer structure, which is phrased so that it appears to the respondent that the interviewer desires or expects a certain answer; yet the interviewer's expectation could not have been derived solely from what the respondent has already said in the interview.'

<sup>37</sup> A 'transition relevance place' is the term used to describe a place where speaker change may occur. Sacks *et al.* (1974:720) note one main feature of the construction of talk in a turn: 'whatever the units employed for the construction, and whatever the theoretical language employed to describe them, they still have points of possible unit completion, points which are projectable before their occurrence.' It is at these points that speaker change can be projected to occur.

<sup>38</sup> The majority of possible completion points involve a complex coincidence of intonational, syntactic and pragmatic completion (Ford and Thompson 1996; Selting 1998; Selting and Couper-Kuhlen 1996).



### Segment 3.2

46. Int: is he living with you as well?  
47. Andrea: ↑yes

[MMPH#4:46–7]

Here rising intonation, indicated by the symbol ↑, signals the end of a question. With no gap and no overlap—the predominant type of turn taking—Andrea takes up her opportunity to respond. That is, she is ready to respond as soon as the interviewer finishes asking the question. Some questions end with falling intonation, indicated by a full stop, as in the following segment from the interview with Chrissy:

### Segment 3.3

19. Int: great. now the first question i:s, are you married or in  
20. a relationship.  
21. Chrissy: i'm in a relationship.

[MMPH#3:19–21]

Whatever the type of turn, interviewer and respondent are still able to project the ends of turns and to come in with no gap and no overlap. In the following example, from the introductory part of the interview with Karen, intonation again plays a role:

### Segment 3.4

11. Int: ah (.) do you remember Marian May (.) contacted you  
12. during this week about doing a short telephone  
13. interview,  
14. Karen: yeah  
15. Int: ah- on the questions to do with children,  
16. Karen: yes.  
17. Int: °and it's part of the other survey.° it takes about ten  
18. minutes and there are only about ten questions,  
19. Karen: okay

[MMPH#19:11–19]

In this example from the interviewer's introduction to the interview Karen projects a possible completion point, signalled in transcription by a comma, signifying 'continuing' or low-rising intonation, at the end of 'short telephone interview.'. The interviewer uses this type of continuing intonation here at the end of each part or unit of talk; it is the end of a *turn-constructural unit* (TCU)<sup>39</sup> but not the end of what she wants to say as her

---

<sup>39</sup> A turn-constructural unit (TCU) is a unit of talk which may build a turn.

However, unlike the examples above, turns are not always ‘tidy’; they are also subject to overlap, interruption and other ‘messy’ features. In an interview the respondent may begin to answer at the same time as the interviewer adds something to her question, as this segment from the interviews with Jess shows:

80. Int: ↑a::h ↑no::w ↑how many children do you think you want to  
81. have in the future=well how many [more childre-  
82. Jess: [one other.

Here, Annie repeats the question because she omitted the scripted word ‘more’ when she asked it the first time. Jess projects the rest of Annie’s question repeat, based on what she has heard already and interrupts before the turn is complete (square brackets indicate the overlap between speakers). In other cases, the respondent may answer at the earliest opportunity (the point of ‘first possible completion’), even though this may not coincide with the end of the interviewer’s turn. The start of Chrissy’s interview shows this happening:

4. Int: oh hi. [my  
5. Chrissy: [you're Annie.

Chrissy pre-empts Annie's introduction at the point of first possible completion, signalled in part by falling intonation, marked in transcription by a full stop. Because the usual rule is that one person talks at a time, one speaker usually stops talking when such overlap occurs—in this case Annie does not continue. This is a case of overlap rather than interruption.

57

completion points in Annie's delivery of the question, signalled by 'continuing' low-rising intonation after the words 'children' and 'agree', and falling intonation after 'work'. Beverly does not take up her turn until she has heard the response option that suits her, demonstrating her willingness to allow Annie to keep her turn:

### Segment 3.7

101. Int: °strongly disagree. right.° (.) ↓um (.) a working mother  
 102. can establish just as warm and secure a relationship  
 103. with her children, as a mother who does not work. do you  
 104. strongly agree, a[gree,  
 105. Beverly: [yeah=i strongly agree with that.

[MMPH#25:101-5]

However, Beverly creates a problem for the interviewer by answering when she hears the appropriate response option for her. 'Strongly agree' is the first response option in the list of five options appended to this question. Annie, therefore, does not have a chance to deliver the complete list before Beverly responds. To continue to repeat the remaining options would infringe one of the rules of ordinary conversation; that is, speakers are supposed to design their talk for a specific recipient and to orient to what that recipient already knows. So if you have already told someone something, you should not tell them again (Sacks 1995:Vol.2, p.438). However, not repeating all options does infringe one of the rules of standardised interviewing: that the complete question be delivered in all cases (Fowler and Mangione 1990:36).<sup>40</sup>

In a similar instance Dale comes in before any response options are delivered, having heard the options in the introduction to the set of statements. According to the scripted questionnaire, Annie was expected to deliver the list again with each statement:

---

<sup>40</sup> It is not clear from the instructions given to NLC interviewers whether they were in fact expected to repeat the options for each statement. My assumption is that they were asked to repeat the options, because Annie, an NLC interviewer, automatically did so for the WOC interviews.

### Segment 3.8

126. Int: and the first one is, a life without children is not fully  
127. complete. [do you-  
128. Dale: [i dis-  
129. Int: >sorry<  
130. Dale: no=i don't agree with that=i think that (.) um- for some people  
131. it can be.

[MMPH#8:126–31]

Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:35) explains the difficulties created by requiring the interviewer to repeat lists of options:

Many of the respondent's interruptions in survey interviews are caused by the fact that the same list of response options may be read again and again. Once the respondents know that this list is going to follow the question, they do not necessarily wait for the interviewer to (fully) present it. This inherent redundancy of questionnaires thus creates what survey methodologists see as inadequate respondent behavior. From the perspective of mundane conversation however, these respondents just take the turn at or near a TRP.<sup>41</sup>

In telephone interviews, the interviewer, as the caller, has the first chance to introduce the first topic of the call (Hopper 1992:34).<sup>42</sup> She requires a longer than usual turn to introduce herself, state her purpose for calling and ask permission to ask the survey questions. The respondent allows this pattern by not starting first and not taking up her turn, allowing the interviewer a long turn to state her purpose and then allowing her to ask the questions. The end of the introduction to the interview and the start of the questions is usually marked by 'ending' and 'beginning' structuring words, as in the interview with Tina:

---

<sup>41</sup> A transition-relevance place (TRP) is explained by Sacks *et al.* (1974:703) as follows: 'The first possible completion of a first such unit [turn-constructional unit] constitutes an initial transition-relevance place. Transition of speakership is coöordinated by reference to such transition-relevance places...' That is, speakers coordinate their talk in relation to TRPs—places where transition is relevant, but may not always occur.

<sup>42</sup> Hopper (1992:34) notes that 'caller hegemony' operates most strongly near the opening of the phone call. Caller and answerer are asymmetrical roles, with social obligations attached to each. See Hopper (1992:56–68) for a detailed review of the analysis of telephone openings. A section on strangers' telephone openings is useful in analysing telephone survey interviews (Hopper 1992:78–83).

### Segment 3.9

19. Int: this takes about ten minutes and there are about ten  
20. questions (.) and these are the same questions (that you  
21. answered when survey.) ↑can  
22. we go through them (quickly now)?  
23. Tina: ↑yeah sure.  
24. Int: okay. so the first question is, are you married or in a  
25. relationship.

[MMPH#12:19–25]

Here, ‘okay.’ (line 24) closes the introduction to the interview and ‘so’ moves on to the next section where the questions are asked. This is an ‘organising’ type of ‘so’. The use of ‘okay’ and ‘so’ in combination to close off one section of talk and at the same time start another has now been well documented in various settings (e.g., Beach 1993; Button 1987b; Button 1990; Rendle-Short 1998, 1999, 2002:18; Schegloff 1979, 1986; Schegloff and Sacks 1973).

Beginnings of turns can be recognised as beginnings. *Appositionals* (Sacks *et al.* 1974:720) such as ‘oh’, ‘well’, ‘but’, ‘so’, and ‘um’ are very common at the start of a turn, either alone or in various combinations. They reveal little about what will happen next, but indicate a ‘pre-start’ to a turn. Segments 3.10–13 from the WOC interviews are examples of various types of turn beginning. Some turns begin with ‘well’, as with Edith’s turn at line 210:

### Segment 3.10

207. Int: um (.) i think the (.) qualifying thing is, like- (.) a  
208. working mother can establish ( possible for her  
209. to establish )  
210. Edith: ↑well, i- it doesn't really ↑matter, as i said. that's a  
211. really hard black and whi(h)te question. tha(h)t one.  
212. huh huh huh

[MMPH#17:207–12]

‘Well’ frequently occurs at or near the beginning of a turn. Debate exists about the functions of ‘well’. Schifffrin (1987:127) claims that ‘well’ is used to achieve coherence, whenever the coherence options offered by one component of talk differ from those of another. Schourup (2001:1058), however, characterises ‘well’ as ‘conveying that the speaker is actively considering whatever it is relevant to consider in determining what should now follow’—that is, ‘well’ denotes an act of ‘active consideration, deliberation,

or sizing up' rather than indicating 'insufficiency'. According to Schourup (2001:1058) when a speaker uses 'well' it suggests 'moving forward from what is already in view to what is now to follow'.

Another common feature of turn beginnings in the WOC interviews is 'um', although 'um' can also occur in other parts of a turn as well:

### Segment 3.11

71. Int:                   (°right°) and (.) um (.) why (°°are you unlikely to have  
72.   another child°°)  
73. Melinda:           ↑um (0.6) well, personal decision=i think i've- i've-  
74.   i've just reached forty this year,

[MMPH#16:71-4]

The 'um' with high pitch at the beginning of a turn, indicated here by the symbol ↑, seems often to mark the start of a new section of talk, as in seminar talk (Rendle-Short 1998). It is a useful marker for organising sections of talk. In other contexts 'um' is often a 'thinking' um, for making a correction or 'doing a word search' (Goodwin and Goodwin 1986). This kind of 'um' can occur at points through a turn also, often together with pauses and uncertainties. It seems to indicate that a speaker is thinking about what to say next or doing some kind of repair work.

At the start of a turn 'now' often seems to be able to function in an organising way, like 'so':

### Segment 3.12

132. Int:                   now the next question is why aren't you likely to (°have  
133.   another child°)

[MMPH#22:132-3]

The interviewer uses 'now' here and frequently throughout the interviews to mark the movement to a new question, as if saying 'what I am going to ask next is this'. Schifffrin (1987:230) observes: '*Now* occurs in discourse in which the speaker progresses through a cumulative series of subordinate units.' Lists and arguments are examples of these kinds of series (see also the discussion below of 'and' as a similar marker). Sometimes 'now' occurs in combination, as in the following segment, with a 'thinking um':

### Segment 3.13

32. Int:                    ↑now ↑um (.) it's really just a similar question to- the  
33.                        same as (ah the ANU study you answered the first time )

[MMPH#17:32-3]

Interviewers and respondents also need to be able to expand their turns, to be able to say something longer. For example, in the introduction to an interview, the interviewer needs to explain her purpose and provide a considerable amount of information to the respondent. Such a turn is called a *multi-unit turn*. Taking a long in-breath can signal a multi-unit turn, as this excerpt (hhh in line 10) from the early part of Chrissy's interview shows:

### Segment 3.14

10. Int:                    .hhh now i'm calling from the Australian Institute of  
11.                        Family Studies¿  
12. Chrissy:               yes¿

[MMPH#3:10-12]

In the previous segment, the interviewer signalled the need for a longer turn by her long in-breath. Both interviewer and respondent can work to allow expanded turns to occur. For example, in this early part of the interview when the interviewer has many tasks to achieve, the respondent frequently demonstrates recognition of the interviewer's need for a longer turn. In withholding talk when they could take their turn, respondents allow interviewers to continue talking. This kind of 'withholding' response has also been documented for news interviews (Heritage and Greatbatch 1991:123). The following example shows how Beverly allows Annie to continue in her introduction to the interview:

### Segment 3.15

10. Int:                    i'm ringing on behalf of the Australian National  
11.                        University,  
12. Beverly:               mm  
13. Int:                    which is conducting a study on how Australians manage  
14.                        their work and family lives,  
15. Beverly:               hm mm  
16. Int:                    and (.) i gather Marian May contacted you last week

[MMPH#25:10-6]

Such a pattern of withholding anything but an acknowledgment also seems to occur when the interviewer is closing down the interview:

### Segment 3.16

229. Int: oka:y, ↑look that's actually the last um (.) question  
 230. Jess: mm hm  
 231. Int: ↑ah (.) thankyou very much for agreeing to take part in  
 232. the survey;  
 233. Jess: mm hm  
 234. Int: and ( ) for your time

[MMPH#9:229–34]

#### 3.1.1 *Continuers and acknowledgment tokens*

Early research showed that listeners use *continuers* such as ‘uh huh’, ‘mm’, ‘yeah’, ‘sure’, and ‘okay’, often with continuing intonation, to show recognition that the speaker has not finished (Schegloff 1982). Manuals for interviewers call these ‘giving encouragement’ (Gorden 1969:276; Keats 2000:64). Interviewers are also urged to use continuers as a way of probing without specifying what the respondent should talk about (Gorden 1969:276). Jefferson’s (1984a) work on ‘yeah’ and ‘mm hm’ and Schegloff’s (1982) work on ‘uh huh’ show that, rather than being conversational ‘detritus’, these continuers, or *acknowledgment tokens*, are used quite systematically by speakers and have important consequences for the shape of interaction. Jefferson (1984a:200) observes that ‘yeah’ can ‘exhibit a preparedness to shift from reciprocity to speakership’, whereas ‘hm mm’ exhibits ‘passive reciprocity’. Later research has pinned down further the role of these ‘interactional devices’ (Czyzewski 1995:75; Drummond and Hopper 1993; Gardner 1997, 1999; Gerhardt and Beyerle 1997; Guthrie 1997).<sup>43</sup> These devices, therefore, influence the way a speaker designs the next turn. For example:

---

<sup>43</sup> Czyzewski (1995) suggests four kinds of ‘hm mm’ in psychotherapeutic intake interviews. Three of these, the conversation-oriented ‘hm mm’; the analytical ‘hm mm’; the parallel ‘hm mm’, are different types of Jefferson’s ‘passive reciprocity’ or Schegloff’s ‘continuers’; the fourth, the starting ‘hm mm’, operates like ‘yeah’ in showing a shift from reciprocity to speakership.



### Segment 3.17

14. Int:                    hh okay, so i'm ringing on behalf of the ANU,  
 15.                       [>which] is [conducting a] study.<  
 16. Carol:               [yep. ]       [yep yep yep ]  
 17. Int:                   ah now Marian May contacted you about doing a  
 18.                       telepho[ne ] interview?  
 19. Carol:               [yes]  
 20. Carol:               ye[ah  
 21. Int:                   [just about the questions about children that's on  
 22.                       that (bigger) survey. [it ] takes about ten minutes=  
 23. Carol:               [mm hm]  
 24. Int:                   = and ah-(.) they're the same questions that were  
 25.                       (on [ ] before  
 26. Carol:               [yep]

[MMPH#:14-26]

Carol repeatedly uses 'yep', 'yes', 'yeah' and 'mm hm' above to acknowledge what Annie has said and to indicate that she can continue her turn. 'Yeah' or 'yes'<sup>44</sup> can be used in various ways and keeps speaker options open (Drummond and Hopper 1993:206). It can be used as a continuer or it can 'signal marshaling of resources' to become speaker. When it is used as an answer to a question, as often happens in interviews, 'yeah' can therefore be ambiguous. Is it agreement with the question or is it indicating starting to say more? Saying more, as will be seen in later chapters, can be disagreeing.

Segment 3.18 shows another continuer, 'right':

### Segment 3.18

41. Int:                   can you tell their (names, sex, and month and year of  
 42.                       birth)  
 43.                       from eldest to youngest,  
 44. Nadia:               Roslyn, female (.) t! u:m sixty six,  
 45. Int:                   °ri:ght,°  
 46. Nadia:               Charles,

[MMPH#21:41-6]

Here, Annie acknowledges Nadia's information—Nadia apparently omits the month—but indicates with °ri:ght,° accompanied by 'continuing' intonation, that she has not received all the information yet. Nadia then gives her the name of her next child.

---

<sup>44</sup> Drummond and Hopper (1993:205) observe that 'yes' is rare in most mundane interactions. 'Yes' or 'yep' is quite common in the WOC interviews. More work is needed on 'yeah' (Drummond and Hopper 1993:209-10).

### 3.1.2 *Rush-throughs*

Another way of expanding a turn is to use a *rush-through*, transcribed with the symbol =. A rush-through is a way for speakers to hold onto their turn when otherwise recipients might consider the turn complete. Hopper (1992:135) describes the rush-through as ‘the major device for abuse of current speakership’. It occurs ‘when a speaker arrives at a transition-relevance place but hurries up the rhythm of discourse just at that point in order to take another turn unit’. In a rush-through there is ‘no interval between the end of a prior and start of a next piece of talk’ (Sacks *et al.* 1974:731). Rush-throughs can be a feature of interviews when either participant wants to keep her turn. In the following segment, both the person who picks up the telephone and the interviewer use rush-throughs to keep talking beyond the point of first possible completion:

#### Segment 3.19

1. Child: hello:,
2. Int: ↑oh ↑hi. look=i was wondering if i could speak to Edith
3. Bain.
4. Child: yes=can i ask who's speaking?
5. Int: yes, look=my name's Annie=i'm calling from the
6. Australian Institute of Family Studies.
7. Child: MUM.

[MMPb#17:1–7]

The person who picks up the telephone here appears to be the respondent's daughter. After her ‘yes’ to Annie's request, she quickly asks for the caller's name, a common way of indicating that the person who answered the phone is not the person wanted by the caller (Silverman 1998:111–2). The interviewer also uses rush-throughs to give several pieces of information that might be relevant for the continuation of the call and keeping the respondent on the line.

This section has shown some of the aspects of turn taking relevant to interaction in standardised survey interviews: how speakers project turns and locally manage turn-taking, how they begin turns and manage to keep or expand their turns. The next section will look at the way sequences are organised in interviews and how interviewers move through their agenda of asking questions.

### 3.2 Sequence organisation in standardised survey interviews

A central concept of CA is that talk is sequentially organised (Schegloff 1968, 1979, 1986; Schegloff and Sacks 1973). Certain types of sequence perform certain social activities, and some actions make other actions relevant next actions in achieving these social activities. In surveys, for example, where obtaining information is the primary purpose, question and answer sequences are common.<sup>45</sup> That is, turns at talk are not independent of each other but are organised together in a meaningful relationship. It is, therefore, important for survey researchers to understand how such sequences operate in interaction.

This smallest and most basic kind of sequence or paired action, where one turn makes another relevant (such as greeting–greeting, summons–answer, invitation–acceptance/refusal, complaint–denial, compliment–rejection), is termed an *adjacency pair* (Schegloff and Sacks 1973:295).<sup>46</sup> The first component, a question in the case of an interview, is the *first pair-part*; the second—the answer—is the *second pair-part*. The ‘rule of operation’ of such adjacency pairs is that if the first pair part is produced and recognised as such by the speaker, then ‘on its first possible completion its speaker should stop and a next speaker should start and produce a second pair part from the pair type of which the first is recognizably a member’ (Schegloff and Sacks 1973:296). This kind of ‘close ordering’ is a general way of ensuring that some activity will be achieved. The basic question–answer sequence is illustrated by the following segment:

#### Segment 3.20

19. Int:                   um the first question is, are you married or in a  
20.                       relationship,  
21. Lindy:               °i'm° married.

[MMPH#26:19–21]

---

<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that, as well as question–answer sequences, many other kinds of talk occur in standardised survey interviews. In the WOC interviews Annie talks to Kristen’s daughter about her favourite TV programme, listens to Kristen’s problems, talks about the weather, and shares with Joanne her own experience of being one of four daughters. Respondents also do other things during the interviews: Andrea says goodbye to a friend; Jess, Tonia and Dale attend to their babies; Lyn goes to switch the television off; and Debra chops onions for the evening meal. Respondents also ask questions and interviewers give answers, taking on each other’s roles (Stewart and Cash 1991:16). Houtkoop-Steenstra (1996; 1997a) discusses such instances of interviewers stepping outside their professional role.

<sup>46</sup> See also Goodwin and Heritage (1990:287–8) and Silverman (1998:100) for reviews of the topic of sequences and adjacency pairs.

Some survey researchers using CA to examine survey-interview interaction call this most common basic sequence the ‘paradigmatic’ sequence (Maynard and Schaeffer 2002:15–6; Schaeffer and Maynard 1996:66; van der Zouwen 2002:55–6). From a survey design perspective, it is the ‘ideal sequence’ (Schaeffer and Maynard 1996:66). However, Schaeffer and Maynard’s (1996) study asking about labour-force participation, conducted by US Bureau of the Census interviewers for the Current Population Survey, found that so-called ‘paradigmatic’ sequences were less common than ‘deviant enactments’ (Schaeffer and Maynard 1996:84).

### 3.2.1 *Sequence-closing thirds (SCTs)*

In interviews, the answer is often acknowledged or ‘closed’ by a third turn, or *sequence-closing third* (SCT). This SCT, as its name implies, is a way of closing the sequence in order to move on to the next question and can take various forms. SCTs such as ‘oh’, ‘yeah’ and ‘okay’ are examples of *minimal post-expansion*, that is, expansion of a sequence after the second pair-part:

Minimal post-expansion involves the addition of one additional turn to a sequence after its second pair part...The import of “minimal” is...that the turn which is added is designed not to project any further within-sequence talk beyond itself; that is, it is *designed* to constitute a *minimal* expansion after a second pair part. It is designed to move for, or to propose, sequence closing (a move which may be aligned with a recipient or not)...Sequence closing thirds take a number of forms or combinations of them, three of the most common of them...[are] “oh,” “okay,” and assessments (Schegloff 1995:114-5).

Segment 3.21 shows how ‘oh’ can be used as to close a sequence:

#### Segment 3.21

47. Int: (okay.) (4.0) and why is it unlikely that you will have  
 48. a child.  
 49. Beverly: because i’m fifty?  
 50. Int: oh.

[MMPh#25:47–50]

The core use of ‘oh’ is to acknowledge or mark the receipt of information, a change of state in the speaker:

Evidence from the placement of the particle in a range of conversational sequences shows that the particle is used to propose that its producer has undergone some

kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness (Heritage 1984a:299).

Recipients confirm with 'oh' that, although they previously did not know something, they now know it. Here, Annie demonstrates to Beverly that she has received new information. Although Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:27) observes that 'oh' is more common in respondent turns, it is a common feature of responses for both interviewer and respondent in the WOC interviews, for example where the interviewer is receiving clarification from the respondent about her answer. This may be related to the type of question that is being asked. 'Oh' and 'ri:ght' sometimes play a role together.<sup>47</sup> In the following example, several ways of closing off the sequence are involved:

### Segment 3.22

74. Debra: i- i- it was very unplanned=it was five months after we  
75. were married.  
76. Int: °oh i see. okay.=so >we'll say unplanned.<° was it a  
77. failure of contraception or family planning method?

[MMPH#27:74-7]

In line 76 above several SCTs are used. First, 'oh' marks receipt of information, 'i see.' shows that the interviewer believes it to be understood, 'okay.' closes that part of the interaction.<sup>48</sup> These are called *composite* SCTs. The interviewer then uses 'so' to re-format what the respondent has said so that it fits an allowable response option.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> 'Ri:ght,' is the first part of a three-turn sequence which generates topic interactionally in conversations (Button and Casey 1984). The preferred next activity is a newsworthy-event-report in a next turn: that is, something that could constitute a topic of interest: 'The first part consists of a topic initial elicitor that is packaged as an inquiry concerning the possibility of presenting a report of a newsworthy event. The second part is a positive response to the first part and produces a newsworthy-event-report that has the status of a possible topic initial. The third part is a topicalizer; that is, it topicalizes the prior possible topic initial and provides for talk on the reported event' (Button and Casey 1984:167). 'Oh' provides an indication that the speaker considers the topic introduced by the previous speaker as 'newsworthy': '... a positive response that produces a newsworthy-event-report has features that require a topicalizing response from the next speaker in order to complete the process of topic generation' (Button and Casey 1984:169). A topic initial elicitor does not designate the particular event to be reported.

<sup>48</sup> Dillman (1978:243) notes: 'The final "ok?" included at the end of the introduction [refers to his example 7.1, p.244] is a way of asking the respondent's permission to start the interview. Interviewers find this a natural way to end an introduction, and our explicit intent at this point is to avoid giving the respondent a feeling of being rushed into the interview, thus getting the questions started on a more relaxed note.'

<sup>49</sup> See the following sub-section on formulations for a discussion of this use of 'so'.

### 3.2.2 *Assessments*

Another way of closing a question–answer sequence may be to use an *assessment*, or evaluation, of the answer (Button 1987b, 1990; Goodwin and Goodwin 1992; Pomerantz 1984a; Schegloff and Sacks 1973). An assessment ‘articulates a stance taken up—ordinarily by the first pair part speaker—toward what the second pair part speaker has said or done in the prior turn’ (Schegloff 1995:121). The following excerpt from the start of Karen’s interview is an example:

#### Segment 3.23

19. Int: and it's the same questions that you've answered  
20. before, =↑u::m would you be able to do that now?  
21. Karen: ↑yes ↑sure.  
22. Int: oh, excellent.

[MMPH#19:19–22]

Karen has given permission for Annie to conduct the interview at that time. Annie’s assessment of this action is ‘excellent’. Although assessments are often used to close sequences, interviewers are discouraged by survey methodologists from using them with survey questions because they constitute evaluations of what the respondent has said (de Vaus 1995:115; Gorden 1969:220–34; Keats 2000:26,40). This becomes one of the specific ‘withholdings’ of interaction in interviews (Drew and Heritage 1992a:24). However, they often occur in interviews as a way of closing other sequences that do not involve the survey questions themselves.

Repetition of the answer by the interviewer is another way of closing a question–answer sequence. Segment 3.24 shows this type of SCT:

#### Segment 3.24

91. Int: okay. and are you currently pregnant?  
92. Coral: no.  
93. Int: °no, °

[MMPH#18:91–3]

Here, the interviewer closes the question–answer sequence by repeating, more quietly, Coral’s ‘no.’ answer.<sup>50</sup> The following segment, also from the interview with Coral, including and following on from the above segment, shows how three such question–answer sequences are connected:

### Segment 3.25

94. Int: okay. and are you currently pregnant?  
 95. Coral: no.  
 96. Int: °no,° and (.) how likely are you to have a child in the  
 97. future.  
 98. Coral: um. (.) t! zero chance.  
 99. Int: so definitely not.  
 100. Coral: ah(h)a tha(h)t's ri(h)ght  
 101. Int: °okay.° and the next question is, why is it unlikely  
 102. that you will have a child.  
 103. Coral: um. (.) pure choice.  
 104. Int: choice. (°okay°) u::m. °kay°=is there any particular  
 105. reason

[MMPH#18:94–105]

This segment demonstrates several common features of sequences in standardised interviews. First, it shows some of the forms that SCTs can take: ‘okay’, said with differing degrees of softness (line 94, 101 and 104), closes off the question–answer sequence; ‘no’ (line 96) is a repeat of the answer; and ‘choice’ (line 103) a partial repeat. In line 104, several SCTs occur, with ‘okay’ finally closing the sequence.

Another feature demonstrated here is the way questions are ‘chained’ using ‘and’ (lines 94, 96, 101). The *chaining rule* (Sacks 1972:343) operates in this way in interviews: a person who has asked a question can ask another question once the other party has responded, allowing for repetition of question–answer sequences. The resulting structure, in its simplest form, is rather like a list of questions and answers. ‘And’ is often used to preface each item in such a list (Heritage 1994), like ‘now’ mentioned above. It shows the way in which the interviewer is in control of the agenda of the interview in determining the asking of a series of questions at precise points in the interview. This kind of progression between questions is quite clear, unlike topic change in ordinary

<sup>50</sup> Softer talk is one of the resources used to indicate that closure is imminent. Resources include type of talk, prosody, use of discourse markers, and, in face-to-face interaction, non-verbal behaviour. Rendle-Short (2002:15–6) gives a succinct review of evidence on this topic. Conversely, a new topic may be signalled by a combination of ‘increased amplitude, raised pitch/amplitude, and self-editing or hesitancy (including in-breath)—and most importantly by those prefatory discontinuity markers that suspend the relevance of the prior topic’ (Drew and Holt 1998:510).

conversation where one topic merges ‘almost imperceptibly into the next’ (Drew and Holt 1998:509), in a seamless ‘step-wise’ progression (Jefferson 1984b).

A particularly common way of the interviewer and respondent negotiating resolution of some of the WOC survey questions is *formulation* (see Chapters 6 and 7). A separate section is devoted to formulations as their role in some WOC questions is quite conspicuous.

### 3.2.3 *Formulations*

Formulations can play a significant role in question–answer sequences (Heritage and Watson 1979; Schegloff 1972). Formulations may do ‘questioning work’ (Heritage and Watson 1979:157), in that they ask a question without sounding as if they are doing so. Heritage’s (1979) work on news interviews shows that formulations are particularly useful in varying the question–answer format and can be used to emphasise the importance of news produced through the broadcasting-media interview. Segment 3.26 (line 189) provides an example of a formulation:

#### Segment 3.26

188. Edith: °↑yeah. ↑it ↑is.° it's lovely watching them grow up  
189. Int: so as a general statement (you'd agree.)  
190. Edith: as a general statement. (i'd agree)

[MMPH#17:188–90]

Here, the interviewer summarises Edith’s answer, ‘so as a general statement (you’d agree)’ in terms of one of the response options ‘agree’. ‘So’, as well as having an organising function, is a frequent feature of formulating.

Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:160–4) shows how interviewers use formulation to produce an answer that matches an allowable response option. Formulations are a way for the interviewer to summarise the interaction so far as a prelude to closing the interaction on one question and moving on to the next.<sup>51</sup> If the interviewer can get the respondent to

---

<sup>51</sup> Heritage and Watson (1979:151) elaborate: “The provision of formulations to mark newly arrived-at understandings of gist may, in turn, become a way to terminate talk at some topic prefatory to the establishment of some new topic-at-hand or indeed the termination of the conversation as a whole. In this respect, formulations may work to give a “signature” to a section of topical talk.”



agree with her formulation of the respondent's answer, this constitutes agreement over a response. As well as checking on her understanding of what the respondent has said, completing questions as efficiently as possible is one of the primary goals of the survey interviewer (AIFS 1998:24,26; Fowler and Mangione 1990:112,120,128).

Using formulations has an added benefit of being economical or time-efficient for an interviewer:

It is noticeable that where, for instance, the provision of a formulation constitutes a 'side sequence' devoted to the checking of sense, its *duration* (if successful) reduces to a minimum of one utterance (plus a decision) which minimizes any break in the flow of topical talk, and indeed enables the checking procedure to be successfully embedded in that flow. Thus, although the provision of a formulation may come to constitute a self-imposed 'understanding test' with certain attendant risks and gains, the conversational economies of formulations would appear to be of overriding significance (Heritage and Watson 1979:152).

Formulations then do 'double duty'; 'this may in turn enable conversationalists to check on the sense of a conversation incidentally, casually or even covertly' (Heritage and Watson 1979:152).

An important characteristic of formulations relevant to interviews is that they involve some mark demonstrating that they have been received, in this case by the respondent, thus requiring an adjacency pair format of 'formulation–decision'. The respondent gives a 'decision' about the formulation (Heritage and Watson 1979:141–2), as in the case of Edith's decision, 'i'd agree', in Segment 3.26 (line 190). If an interviewer suggests a possible paraphrase using the words of a response option and that formulation is confirmed, the interviewer can take this as acceptance of the response option. It seems also that there is a preference for confirmation of formulations; that is, it takes more interactional work to 'disconfirm':

A preliminary inspection of our data suggests that such a preference does exist with respect to formulations and that confirmations are massively preferred...Pomerantz also indicates that where agreements or disagreements constitute second assessments (that is, assessments produced by recipients of first assessments in adjacent turns), agreements—like confirmations of formulations—are massively preferred (Heritage and Watson 1979:143).

Thus, if an interviewer produces a formulation based on a response option, it is much easier (less interactionally troublesome) for the respondent to agree. This has implications for response outcomes in cases where respondents do not have a strong



### Segment 3.28

79. Int: (°right°) so i'll just put that (°part time [um not=  
80. Carol: [mm hm,  
81. Int: = applicable for job)  
82. Carol: um- ·hh not- yeah=but i think it's important to note, not  
83. because- ·hh it's not a financial consideration. [it's]=  
84. Int: [yeah]  
85. Carol: =mo::re a career consideratio[n].  
86. Int: [yes. yes. well there  
87. is [one ] thing- one option here, that says my career=  
88. Carol: [·hhh]  
89. Int: =would [be ] affected so [obviously that's (the one)  
90. Carol: [hhh] [yeah.  
91. Carol: that's the one. hh ·hh

[MMPH#15:79-91]

Annie formulates Carol's answer in a way that Carol does not agree with. Carol's turn (line 82) starts with a series of dispreferred markers: 'um- ·hh not- yeah=but', expressing her lack of confirmation. This includes a 'confirmation' marker 'yeah' as well as 'but' indicating 'disconfirmation'. The interaction over this question is prolonged considerably by the exercise of sorting out the misunderstanding. Eventually, Annie gives another formulation (line 89) and this time Carol confirms it. This example shows clearly the way in which an agreed response is the result of collaboration and joint construction between the interviewer and the respondent.

Formulations play a major role in the achievement of 'closings' of sequences, as candidate pre-closings, or devices 'which work to set up the prospective relevance of terminal adjacency pairs' (Heritage and Watson 1979:154). Heritage and Watson explain how formulations work so well:

The reason why formulations work well in this kind of situation is that they 'manifest three central properties: preservation, deletion and transformation' (Heritage and Watson 1979:129).

In the WOC interviews, by using formulations, Annie can preserve some elements of what the respondent has said, delete other elements that do not fit the response options, and at the same time transform the respondent's answer into a response option, in theory preserving the gist of it. Thus, when the respondent's initial answer does not match any response option and the interaction is, therefore, in jeopardy, a formulation can be a repair strategy (Heritage and Watson 1979:137). It can provide a 'candidate reading' (Heritage and Watson 1979:138) for what has been said and, therefore, possibly

fit one of the allowable response options on the interview schedule. If the formulation is appropriate, this strategy can settle a response; if not, the interaction is prolonged and goes through at least one other such cycle before the response is achieved.

### 3.2.4 *Pauses, gaps and lapses*

Pauses, gaps and lapses in talk represent important features of interaction in interviews.<sup>53</sup> Within the turn-taking system, when something does not occur as expected, or occurs out of its normal position, it signals something significant for the relationship between the parties. It becomes noticeable and, therefore, accountable as a violation of the system. Pauses, gaps and lapses are labels for silence at different points, signalling different issues in interaction. Survey methodologists sometimes refer to silence as an interviewing technique; silence can ensure that the interviewer does not interrupt the respondent; it can create a slower pace that is conducive to a 'more thoughtful mood', and allow the respondent to control the direction of the next step in the conversation (Gorden 1969:187–90). Manuals for interviewers discuss the use of the 'silent probe' as a way of indicating to the respondent that more information is wanted (Gorden 1969:189,275–6 ; Keats 2000:64; Stewart and Cash 1991:60). As Gorden (1969:189) points out, too much silence is also possible. In any case, Gorden (1969:190) recommends that interviewers develop a 'sensitivity to the use of silence'.

Uncertainty indicated by pauses or silence is generally considered by survey methodologists to originate with the respondent (Schaeffer *et al.* 1993:2). Schaeffer, Maynard and Cradock (1993:2) observe that it is less common to think of uncertainty in the standardised survey interview as an interactional achievement of both interviewer and respondent. on the basis of asking survey questions they suggest a four-part structure, extending the paradigmatic question–answer sequence in the following way (Schaeffer *et al.* 1993:3):

Interviewer:	Asks question
Respondent:	Answers
Interviewer:	Receipt/acknowledgment
((silence while preparing to ask next question))	

---

<sup>53</sup> Hopper (1992:105ff) discusses the special case of pauses and gaps in telephone talk.

Schaeffer *et al.* (1993:3) also suggest that respondent answers that contain markers of uncertainty and are, initially at least, not in the format required by the response options might be considered ‘latent “don’t knows”’. When a respondent’s answer is not forthcoming, an interviewer will try to find out why this is so, sometimes presenting a candidate solution (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:23). These silences are gaps between turns. Segments 3.29 and 3.30 show the way pauses can operate within and between turns:

**Segment 3.29**

207. Int:                um (.) i think the (.) qualifying thing is, like- (.) a  
208.                    working mother can establish (                    ) possible for  
209.                    her to establish (                    )

[MMPH#17:207–9]

Here, the pauses within the turn indicate the interviewer pausing in the process of constructing an interpretation of a question for a respondent. This is not a scripted part of the questionnaire, and Annie seems to be deciding how to phrase her answer.

Gaps are silences between turns. One of the ‘grossly apparent facts’ in conversation is that transitions from one turn to the next commonly occur with no gap and no overlap (Sacks *et al.* 1974:700-1). Gaps in conversation can be interactionally difficult because no gap is expected by the turn-taking system; the second pair-part is expected to be contiguous (Sacks 1987). In sequences, gaps are particularly noticeable. Sacks (1995:308–11) notes that when the first part of a paired object has been completed, any pause by the other party is seen as their pause, their responsibility; thus, it is the second party’s turn to answer once a question is heard as complete. According to Jefferson (1989), one second is the maximum tolerable amount of silence in ordinary conversation in English. Exceptions have been documented, however. Longer silences are common in seminar talk (Rendle-Short 2002:13). Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:38) notes that much longer gaps and pauses can also be observed in the case of survey interviews, as the excerpt below shows:

### Segment 3.30

92. Int: =a life without children is not fully complete. do you  
93. strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.  
94. (2.0)  
95. Liz: i disagree.  
96. (0.6)  
97. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of the  
98. mother. (2.0) °do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or  
99. strongly disagree.°  
100. (3.6) ((phone crackle))  
101. Liz: .hhhh (hang on while i think back) hhh .hh i- (.) er- not  
102. too much um- no- um (.) .hh (hang on) a tick (.) u:(h)m  
103. Int: >°take your time°>

[MMPH#20:92-103]

The segment above shows two long gaps of 2.0 and 3.6 seconds between question and answer (lines 94, 100). A silence can be attributed as ‘someone’s silence’ (Schegloff and Sacks 1973:294–5). Thus, after the question has been asked by the interviewer, any gap between the question and the answer is ‘owned’ by the respondent. Here, it is Liz’s gap. Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:39) points out that silences may be used by interviewers as an alternative to an explicit request for more talk or ‘a different answer’.<sup>54</sup> They do this by not doing something—not taking a turn, not giving any acknowledgment—after the respondent has given an answer. In fact, it may be that longer gaps are tolerated in telephone survey interviews; for example, a respondent may take a few seconds to consider her response. A gap may not, therefore, indicate a problem with the question as such.

Lapses are a cessation of talk altogether. Because of the tightly ordered sequencing and agenda of a survey, interview lapses are not common. Occasionally, talk stops while the respondent or interviewer attends to some other business, but this seems to be a temporary suspension of the interaction rather than a lapse.

#### 3.2.5 *Expanded question–answer sequences*

Whereas SCTs expand question–answer sequences in a minimal way after the sequence, the basic question–answer sequences in interviews are often also expanded in various non-minimal ways. Some sequences—*insert sequences*—are inserted between the question

---

<sup>54</sup> Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:39) gives this as an example of what Schegloff (1992b) refers to as ‘a non-repair way of dealing with troubles’.

and the answer (Schegloff 1972). Sequences can become quite long, but they still remain based around the question–answer sequence. These expansions take care of business that needs to be attended to before the question can be answered. In interviews, however, post-expansion, that is expansion after the second pair-part is particularly common. Disagreement regularly leads to expansion of a sequence in this way (Schegloff 1995). Additional work has to be done to resolve the problem in communication before the sequence can be closed. The interaction around these sequences often becomes quite messy and unclear:

### Segment 3.31

26. Int: and er how many children have you ever had.  
 27. Kristen: two. and i've lost one.  
 28. Int: °ri:ght° so you've actually er had three children.  
 29. (0.6)  
 30. Kristen: ·hh we::ll the other one was only about eight weeks, so i  
 31. dunno whether that [counts.  
 32. Int: [no (it doesn't)  
 33. Kristen: oh. i don't know. how it goes,  
 34. Int: ↑oh ↑well we sort of ask how many (.) children you've  
 35. actually given birth to [(so )  
 36. Kristen: [oh. right. well that's two.  
 37. Int: °that's two altogether°.  
 38. Kristen: yeah  
 39. Int: ↑oh sorry. i thought- i see what you're saying (°  
 40. °)  
 41. Kristen: yeah  
 42. Int: (°yeah okay°.)

[MMPH#6:26–42]

Kristen adds to her answer (line 27) the information 'and i've lost one.' This leads to clarification from the interviewer: 'so you've actually er had three children.' The subsequent talk then eventually clears up this question. As with this example, post-expansion often occurs as a result of the respondent adding to her answer or asking for clarification or the interviewer clarifying the question or what the respondent has said in response. The basic question–answer sequence remains fundamental and is successfully negotiated to a close before another is initiated. Kristen's and Annie's last two turns (lines 41 and 42) are a final sequence specifically designed to close a long sequence such as this. Kristen confirms Annie's assessment with 'yeah' acting like a 'go-ahead' for closing the sequence. Annie goes along with the proposed closing with her '°yeah okay°.' The above segment from Kristen's interview shows how problematic post-expansion can be for interviewers.

### 3.2.6 *The concept of preference and dispreferred responses*

*Preference* refers to the way that some sequences imply options for responses.<sup>55</sup> For example, a person can either accept or refuse an invitation. In a social sense, however, accepting is preferred and easier to do interactionally. This does not coincide with an individual's personal preference for accepting or refusing the invitation (Bilmes 1988:171). It simply means that it is generally simpler, in an interactional sense, to accept than to refuse. Atkinson and Heritage (1984:53) note further:

The term 'preference' refers to a range of phenomena associated with the fact that choices among nonequivalent courses of action are routinely implemented in ways that reflect an institutionalized ranking of alternatives. Despite its connotations, the term is not intended to reference personal, subjective or 'psychological' desires or dispositions.

To use an everyday example, most speakers have refused an unwanted invitation 'with appropriate delay and expressions of regret at a competing engagement' (Atkinson and Heritage 1984:54). This lengthened or delayed response is termed a 'dispreferred' response (see Section 3.2.5).

Socially, then, a preference for agreement over disagreement generally operates. A speaker can design a turn so that agreement is preferred. This kind of turn design, where it is interactionally harder or more complicated to disagree, is evident in interviews and constitutes directive behaviour. Segment 3.32 shows how it is easier for Lyn to agree than to disagree following Annie's turn at line 50:

---

<sup>55</sup> The concept of preference organisation is widely discussed in CA research (Bilmes 1988; Pomerantz 1984a; Sacks 1987, 1995:Volume 2, p.414; Schegloff *et al.* 1977). Atkinson and Heritage (1984: 53) summarise it in this way: 'The concept of preference has developed in conversation analytic research to characterize conversational events in which alternative, but nonequivalent, courses of action are available to the participants'. One application of preference is in adjacency pairs, such as invitations and refusals/acceptances or questions and answers. The association of delay with dispreferred responses seems to be an extension of Sacks's original thinking (Bilmes 1988:171). Silverman (1998:123) notes: 'preferred answers take on a form which Sacks describes as "Yes-period". And dispreferred answers are of a "No-plus" form, that is, they provide an account'.



### Segment 3.32

47. Int: and is she living with you now?  
48. Lyn: a:h yes (.) but the children (.) you know (>°also spend time  
49. with their father.°<)  
50. Int: oh ↓ye:s. but they're primarily with you.  
51. Lyn: yep.

[MMPh#2:47–51]

Lyn's answer to the question is a 'yes but' answer—a disagreement. Annie acknowledges her answer, formulating an alternative understanding in the form of a statement that expects confirmation: 'oh ↓ye:s. but they're primarily with you.' Here, Lyn confirms this statement. It is not clear that Lyn would have come up with this response if left to respond in her own way. The elaborated answer gives the researcher more information but it may not be the way the respondent would have expressed her situation.

Yes–no questions, like those in the above segment, cause problems in interviews (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:24; Molenaar and Smit 1996; Suchman and Jordan 1990a). Yes–no questions are a type of closed question to which the allowed response is either 'yes' or 'no'. Interviewers frequently use yes–no questions to probe an answer that does not fit the available response options, thus breaking the rules of neutral interviewer behaviour by probing in a directive way (Fowler and Mangione 1990:33). The interviewer has no way of knowing whether the question is understood, because 'yes' and 'no' assume understanding and give no information on how a respondent understands a question. Houtkoop-Steenstra (1996:216–9) notes that in Dutch interviews 'yes' may often not mean 'yes', but rather be acquiescence in the face of difficulties in addressing the frame of the question. Dutch interview data show that respondents frequently change their 'yes' or 'no' response after receiving more information on the intent of the question (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:24). Suchman and Jordan (1990a) show that the use of yes–no questions poses an inherent threat to the validity of responses. However, for this very reason, they are a useful resource for interviewers in achieving a response. The interviewer does not have to obtain a display of understanding and can then proceed to close the question. This is also a possibility in the WOC interviews. It is not always clear that a respondent's 'yes' means 'yes'.

The following segment of Joanne's interview shows the way in which this preference for agreement can operate. Joanne's 'i think=↑yeah' is not convincing:<sup>56</sup>

### Segment 3.33

174. Int: °↑now° children have too great an impact on the freedom of the  
 175. mother. do you [strongly agree, °agree, [d ]isagree or=  
 176. Joanne: [ahh ] [t!]  
 177. Int: =strongly disagree°  
 178. (1.3)  
 179. Joanne: oh. dear. (1.3) this all goes back to this confusion. because  
 180. (our views are such-) ↑u:m (1.6) no. <i don't really>  
 181. Int: disagree.  
 182. Joanne: i think=↑yeah

[MMPH#10:174–82]

Joanne's delayed answer (line 179) is unclear. Annie suggests 'disagree.' as a candidate answer. Interviewer suggestion can easily lead to acquiescence on the part of the respondent (Smit 1995; Smit *et al.* 1997), especially if she does not have a clear opinion. Delay, achieved through lengthening, as shown by Joanne's delay in responding (line 178), often marks reluctance to answer (Bilmes 1988:173). According to Bilmes (1988:173), reluctance markers are 'expressive of the speaker's reluctance to produce the response which follows'. Pomerantz (1984a) discusses these in terms of 'dispreference markers'. The lengthening in line 71 of Segment 3.34 illustrates this phenomenon:

### Segment 3.34

68. Int: and was it actually a failure of contraception or family  
 69. planning method?  
 70. (1.0)  
 71. Jess: o:::hhh let's see::, let's see: ubwa wa wa wa (.) .hh i  
 72. guess: yeah: hhhhhh (h)

[MMPH#9:68–72]

Jess gives a lengthy delayed response here, containing various idiosyncratic ways of expressing hesitation: lengthening of words, repetition, 'ubwa wa wa wa', pauses, and hedges, such as 'let's see' and 'i guess'. The preference for agreement is important for understanding respondents' answers in interaction. Is respondents' agreement

<sup>56</sup> Coates (1996:Ch.7) explores women's use of 'hedges': 'Hedges are words and phrases which have the effect of dampening down the force of what we say...as in "to hedge your bets", where "hedge" means roughly "to avoid taking decisive action"' (Coates 1996:152). Such expressions as 'I think', 'I guess', 'sort of' and 'I mean' are hedges.

convincing or has it been achieved with the help of the preference system? Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:34) emphasises this importance:

The fact that speakers orient toward the preference for agreement is very relevant in survey methodology. Interviewers who request a confirmation should be aware that the response may be put in a dispreferred turn format. Interviewers must carefully attend to what respondents do and how they talk, paying close attention to possible dispreferred actions.

The result of the operation of preference in interviews is that acquiescence is a possibility. De Vaus (1995:388) defines *acquiescence response set* as follows: ‘the tendency of some respondents to automatically agree with agree/disagree questionnaire statements’. Acquiescence may be related to this concept of preference, especially as mentioned above, when a respondent does not have a clear opinion. To say ‘no’, a respondent must often do more interactional work. So it may be easier in some circumstances to agree than to disagree.<sup>57</sup> This type of situation, where a respondent’s ‘yes’ answer is unconvincing, is discussed in later chapters. It is particularly a problem where the respondent’s answer does not easily fit the response options and is more common with some WOC questions than with others.

The *dispreferred* response is one kind of response that warrants special treatment because it occurs frequently in answers to WOC survey questions. Dispreferred responses can be understood in the context of the idea of preference, as outlined in the previous section. Dispreferred responses threaten social relationships unless extra interactional work is done to maintain co-operation. Features of dispreferred responses include silence (gaps and pauses) and disagreements phrased as if they are agreements, with ‘um’, ‘well’, ‘uh’ and audible breathing. Dispreferred responses are preceded by delaying devices such as hesitation, requests for clarification, repair initiation and partial repeats. They are often expressed by weak agreement. Joanne’s response below is an example of a dispreferred response preceded by an excuse, or *warrant*.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> For a more detailed discussion of acquiescence, see Sacks (1987).

<sup>58</sup> A warrant gives an account of the reason for the dispreferred component having to be articulated (Liddicoat 2002:36; Sacks 1995:Vol.1, p.66).

### Segment 3.35

159. Int: um (.) a [life without children] is [not fully complete].  
 160. Joanne: [life without children] [yeah  
 161. (2.0)  
 162. Joanne: ↑ummmhh ( ) yea::h=i'd have to:: a- fully complete.  
 163. [oh yeah=i'd ] have to agree::,  
 164. Int: [so s- strong-]  
 165. Int: >oh sorry<  
 166. Joanne: yeah=i'd have to y- ↑u:m (.) yea:h, >hang on,< i'm- i'm a bit  
 167. tired, an i've been u(h)p si(h)nce about five, so i  
 168. [might ] (.) get it back to front that's all. =  
 169. Int: [↑well-]  
 170. Joanne: =[i'm likely ] to do, ·hhh [↑so-  
 171. Int: [that's alright,] [oh i see, °i see°=  
 172. Joanne: =yeah. so i think that life without children, yes-  
 173. u:m- (1.3) <i-is not complete::te, (0.6) u::m i would  
 174. a:gree::,=i wouldn't say s:trongly agree.> righteo,

[MMPH#10:159-74]

Here, Annie is repeating a statement after Joanne has requested repetition. Joanne's turns starting in lines 162, 166, and 172 show many markers of a dispreferred response—gaps, disagreements phrased as 'yeah' and an excuse, or warrant. Dispreferred responses need to be explained by the speaker. Unlike a preferred response, which usually occurs immediately after the previous turn has been completed, a dispreferred response tends to be 'non-contiguous'. That is, it 'may well be pushed rather deep into the turn that it occupies' (Sacks 1987:58). Joanne's disagreement with Annie's formulation in line 164 finally comes late in Joanne's turn beginning at line 172.

In summary, this section on sequence organisation has illustrated some of the features of sequences that demonstrate how sequences operate in standardised survey interviews. The following section outlines the way turn-taking organisation in interviews is repaired when it breaks down.

### 3.3 The organisation of repair

From examples given above it is clear that interaction between interviewer and respondent sometimes runs into trouble. Respondents sometimes complain that they cannot understand, asking for the trouble to be fixed. Interviewers sometimes cannot match the respondents' answers with the response options in front of them and seek a different answer. A vital part of the system of turn taking in interviews is what happens between interviewer and respondent when problems occur—when the turn-taking

system breaks down (Sacks *et al.* 1974; Schegloff *et al.* 1977). As stated by Sacks *et al.* (1974:724):

The compatibility of the model of turn-taking with the facts of repair is thus of a dual character: the turn-taking system lends itself to, and incorporates devices for, repair of its troubles; and the turn-taking system is a basic organizational device for the repair of any other troubles in conversation. The turn-taking system and the organization of repair are thus 'made for each other' in a double sense.

Conversation analysts refer to various kinds of difficulties in interaction as 'problems' or 'troubles'—interaction which does not proceed smoothly, as demonstrated by such phenomena as pauses, perturbations, hesitation, delay, correction and repair (Heritage and Watson 1979:161; Psathas 1995:18; Schegloff *et al.* 1977; Silverman 1998:124). Troubles can include, among other phenomena, 'misarticulations, malapropisms, use of a "wrong" word, unavailability of a word when needed, failure to hear or to be heard, trouble on the part of the recipient in understanding, incorrect understandings by recipients, and various others' (Schegloff 1987b:210). Schegloff (1987b:210) summarises: 'Because anything in talk can be a source of trouble, everything in conversation is, in principle, "repairable"'. Segments 3.36–38 illustrate a variety of these phenomena:

### Segment 3.36

216. Carol:                    .hh whereas i d- i don't agree with that,=i reckon: that  
217.                            (.) .hh for a child under three:, (1.0) um (.) it's  
218.                            actually quality- ah- quantity of time.

[MMPh#15:216–8]

Carol's turn here shows several kinds of repair made by Carol while she continues talking. Pauses, delay and hesitation, together with word difficulties: 'i d- i don't' and 'quality- ah- quantity', are used here to do specific repair work within Carol's turn.

The beginnings of turns are important places for projecting what the turn will be like. Will the respondent do as expected and provide her response in the form of an allowable response option immediately? Will she disagree? Much important work is done at turn beginnings (Hopper 1992:101). Various markers indicating sequential organisation occur at the beginnings of turns: 'oh,' 'um,' 'so' and others. The start of a turn is a vulnerable position, where another speaker may wish to take up her turn as early as possible (Schegloff 1987c:73). If she starts too early, resulting in overlap with the previous

speaker, problems in understanding can arise. Schegloff (1987c:75) explains the way speakers resolve such a situation:

The point is: imagine speaker A is talking along, and speaker B is to start up, and they ought to do it in such a way as to bring off a minimisation of gap and overlap between their turns, of which no-gap no-overlap is the ideal outcome. What happens if they fail? They do not simply throw up their hands in despair. Having failed once, and finding themselves in the midst of an overlap, such participants do not give up: having failed to get a *first start* to be achieved with no-gap and no-overlap, they try to achieve the *re-start* with no-gap and no-overlap, and regularly they do so successfully.

A type of repair common at the beginning of turns is a *recycled turn beginning* (Schegloff 1987c). The recycled turn beginning seems to be a useful device for stopping people talking for too long. It helps as a counterbalancing mechanism for the rush-through, the device referred to earlier (Section 3.1) whereby a speaker can keep her turn by speeding up the pace of talk so as to get through a point where another speaker could take a turn. Some participants in interviews do not relinquish their turn easily. The following interaction is an example of a recycled turn beginning:

### Segment 3.37

133. Kristen: well i was on a fertility drug with my first one,  
134. Int: right. [were you- eventually- ]  
135. Kristen: [because they said i couldn't- ] yeah. cos they  
136. said i couldn't get pregnant.

[MMPH#6:133-6]

The respondent, Kristen, is keen to talk further about her attempt to become pregnant. After Annie acknowledges Kristen's first response, she starts to ask another question. Kristen starts talking at the same time. Both speakers talk along for a while, but Annie drops out. Kristen then repeats or 'recycles' what she has already said to start her turn and continues to talk. Hopper (1992:135) refers to recycled beginnings as 'a next-speaker's weapon against a continuing speaker's turn piracy'. In this case, Kristen seems to consider Annie the pirate.

When problems occur between speakers in interviews, one or other party initiates repair of the problem and one or other party carries out the repair work. Repair can be initiated by the original speaker—*self-initiated repair*—or by the other party—*other-initiated repair*. One type of repair—*third-position repair*—especially features in the WOC interviews. In an interview if the second pair-part of a question-answer sequence does not occur, it

becomes accountable and some kind of repair occurs. Repair can be done in various ways (Schegloff 1987c, 1992b; Schegloff *et al.* 1977). It can be done in the same turn as the trouble, in the next turn, or in the turn after that—the phenomenon of third-position repair, or *repair after next turn* (Schegloff 1992b). It is preferably done by the person who made the ‘repairable’—*self-repair* (Schegloff *et al.* 1977)—but can be done by the other party—*other-repair*. The vast majority of problems in understanding are dealt with immediately (Schegloff 1992b:1302), with the result that the source of trouble usually does not become serious or lead to total breakdown in communication. Repair, then, mends social relationships.

In survey interviews, third-position repair is a particularly important feature, as also noted by Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:29–33). The pattern is as follows: the interviewer asks a question, the respondent answers, and the interviewer initiates a repair that indicates to the respondent that her answer does not constitute an adequate response to the question. The following lengthy interaction is an example of how third-turn repair can extend the negotiation required to resolve a problem:

### Segment 3.38

13. Int: ↑um i gather Marian May contacted you last week about  
 14. doing a short ten minute interview?  
 15. Helen: yes she did=but she didn't say it was work and family=  
 16. you see- i don't ↑work.  
 17. Int: >OH NO NO<=because wha[t ] we're doing- i think you've=  
 18. Helen: [oh.]  
 19. Int: =actually done (the particular study about work  
 20. Int: and family life) [and u: ]m this is just a few=  
 21. Helen: [oh yeah]  
 22. Int: =questions about- ten questions about ( )  
 23. children ( ) [there's-] it's only about ten=  
 24. Helen: [mm ]  
 25. Int: =questions and it should only take about ten minutes,  
 26. Helen: mm hm  
 27. Int: some questions are the same as the previous survey (°you  
 28. might remember them°)  
 29. Helen: no i don't.  
 30. Int: (h)hhhh [ha  
 31. Helen: [hhHA HA  
 32. Int: \$(it's) pro(h)bably qui(h)te a while ago\$  
 33. Helen: yeah=oh well i suffer with (.) EM EM EL a (mind) full  
 34. of memoral- memory loss  
 35. Int: shh don't worry=we've all got a bit of that  
 36. Helen: ah HA HA HA ·hhh [\$i was ] wrackin my brain tryin to=  
 37. Int: [·hhh okay]  
 38. Helen: =remember=i do remember\$=i often y- do get these survey  
 39. calls and [·hh ] carry on on em,  
 40. Int: [yeah]  
 41. Int: yeah  
 42. Helen: foolin about- an talk on em, and i cannot re- i can't

43. remember [for the life of me]  
 44. Int: [no:::] ] look it would've been  
 45. quite a while- about two years so ( )  
 46. Helen: okey doke.=  
 47. Int: =now. the first question is, are you married or in a  
 48. relationship.

[MMPH#22:13-48]

Early in the introduction to the interview Annie's first pair-part (line 13) does not receive the second pair-part she anticipated from Helen. Helen's next turn (line 15) shows that she has a problem with the scope of the survey. Annie's third turn (line 17), then, begins to repair the problem. Annie repeats information and reassures Helen that her participation in the survey is wanted. The interaction becomes longer again with another instance of third-turn repair: Annie's assumption that Helen might remember the questions from the first time that she was interviewed turns out to be wrong. So instead of saying that she remembers, Helen says 'no i don't.' (line 29). Laughter and joking about memory loss are part of the repair work here (lines 30ff)(see Section 3.4.2). Many instances of repair are involved in this segment, as well as these instances of third-turn repair. Both interviewer and respondent repair problems in their own talk. Annie, for example, changes what she starts to say (line 17) and Helen corrects a wrong word (line 34).

Across the WOC interviews, a wide range of repair mechanisms is evident. However, it is beyond the scope of the brief treatment of the organisation of repair in this chapter to provide a complete set of examples. More detailed examples and analysis are provided in later chapters in relation to specific questions from the interviews. Much of the analysis in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 relies on the importance of repair in interaction; that is, interaction is not straightforward, but becomes problematic in some way.

### 3.4 Construction and design of turns

An understanding of the way in which interviewer and respondent collaborate in constructing and designing their turns is important in interpreting what occurs in standardised survey interviews. Turns can be constructed from various types of turn-constructional units (TCUs): sentences, clauses, phrases and words (Sacks *et al.* 1974:702). Laughter can be a TCU. As ten Have (1999:120) observes, 'any



conversational action can be performed in many *different* ways; how a turn is designed is a meaningful *choice*'.

### 3.4.1 *The notion of recipient design*

*Recipient design* is the most general principle that characterises conversational interactions (Sacks *et al.* 1974:727). That is, we design talk by reference to how that talk will be heard:

By 'recipient design' we refer to a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants. In our work we have found recipient design to operate with regard to word selection, topic selection, admissibility and ordering of sequences, options and obligations for starting and terminating conversations, etc. (Sacks *et al.* 1974:727).

As speakers, we design the way we talk with our audience in mind. Participants in interaction collaborate in allocating and constructing turns. This achieves 'a particular ordering of particular-sized turns and turn-transition characteristics of the particular conversation at a particular point in it' (Sacks *et al.* 1974:727). Thus, no two conversations or, in this case, no two standardised interviews are identical. For example, Chapter 4 of this thesis shows the variety of ways questions were asked in the WOC interviews.

Grice (1975, 1989) developed the concept of 'implicatures' in conversation, noting that people generally mean much more than they say. Grice's view was that implicatures work because speakers and listeners co-operate in conversation. Grice (1975:45) stated his co-operative principle thus:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

The co-operative principle is constituted by four maxims: of quantity, quality, relation and manner. These can be summarised as follows: be relevant, brief, and orderly in what you say, fit in with the purpose of the exchange, and avoid obscurity and ambiguity. Speakers violate these maxims, but as long as the overall co-operative principle is adhered to—that is, as long as speakers note or repair the violation—communication can usually continue because participants realise its intentional nature.

Listeners, also, actively collaborate in designing and constructing the talk. Sacks (1995:Vol.1, p.379) explains joint construction or negotiation of talk in this way:

So, each part, then, of a conversation becomes a piece of collaboration. One isn't getting a situation where, simply, A follows some rule and B follows some rule, but whatever rule A follows, B has now to inspect to see what rule he should follow, and that he followed it is something that A has now to check out to see what he should do, etc. etc.

The use of continuers and silence are ways of avoiding taking a turn, leaving the way open for the speaker to continue. In interviews, respondents use these strategies to delay or avoid answering questions or to allow the interviewer to continue her turn, as demonstrated earlier by Segments 3.16 and 3.17.

Interview questions, however, can be termed 'audience-designed' rather than 'recipient-designed' (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995:92,104) They are designed in a general format applicable to large numbers of respondents rather than for the situation of particular individuals. This can cause problems for individual respondents, as shown in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7.

### **3.4.2    *Affiliation***

*Affiliation* is a term used in CA to describe the kinds of features in interaction that maintain a 'personal' relationship between participants (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:151). The survey methodology literature frequently uses the term 'rapport' or 'empathy' to refer to a desirable relationship between interviewer and respondent (Ball 1968; Fowler and Mangione 1990:55; Frey 1983; Gorden 1969:18–28; Keats 2000:23–6; Schober and Conrad 1997). Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000) devotes a chapter to the discussion of rapport in interaction in standardised survey interviews. Interviewer styles are said to influence rapport (Dijkstra and van der Zouwen 1987). The AIFS Interviewer Manual (1998:23) encourages interviewers to 'be friendly'. However, interviewer manuals are unclear about precisely what interviewers should do to achieve this 'rapport' (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:128). Affiliation is related to such phenomena as laughter, politeness strategies and apologies, displayed in the design and shape of turns.

CA research on affiliation shows exactly how interviewers act out their role and how rapport is established or not (Collins 1997; Greatbatch 1992; Komter 1991). A survey

interview can be seen as an imposition on the respondent. In survey interviews the respondent is the one who holds information that the interviewer needs. It takes time and requires co-operation in answering questions for the survey researcher. The onus is on the interviewer to keep the respondent on side enough to continue to answer questions and supply information. Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:Ch.7) notes three aspects to this process: interviewers' reaction to respondents' talk; interviewers' praise actions; and interviewers' reactions to reported competence problems. Examples of these have been given earlier in this chapter: the way Annie reassures Helen about her participation in the survey and shares experiences on memory loss (Segment 3.38) is a clear example of her affiliative reaction to what Helen said about her eligibility for the survey; Annie's positive assessment of Karen's assent to carrying out the interview at that time (Segment 3.23) is a 'praise action'; and her reaction to Joanne's inability to understand the question (Segment 3.35) constitutes a 'competence' reaction.

Laughter can be used as an affiliative device (Brown and Levinson 1987:40–1; Collins 1997; Glenn 1995; Jefferson 1979, 1984c, 1988; Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff 1987; O'Donnell-Trujillo and Adams 1983; Schenkein 1972). Coates (1996:107,145) found laughter to be a significant component of the talk of women friends, signalling 'amusement, surprise, horror, sympathy or catharsis', as well as embarrassment. Research on laughter in interaction shows it to be systematically produced and socially organised (Jefferson *et al.* 1987:152). Jefferson (1984c) examined the role of laughter in talk about troubles. She found a recurrent phenomenon: 'A troubles-teller produces an utterance and then laughs, and the troubles recipient does not laugh but produces a recognizably serious response' (Jefferson 1984c:346).

The role of laughter in survey interviews has not been examined in detail.<sup>59</sup> In job interviews the interviewers rather than the interviewees are the ones to initiate laughter; those being interviewed join in previously initiated laughter (Collins 1997). Lavin and Maynard (2002:336) define 'rapport' in a restricted way as 'the occurrence of reciprocal laughter between respondents and interviewers'. Lavin and Maynard (2002:342–4) differentiate various types of laughter: question-oriented or answer-oriented respondent

---

<sup>59</sup> A further contribution to the research on laughter in interviews is Lavin and Maynard's recently published chapter 'Standardization vs. rapport: how interviewers handle the laughter of respondents during telephone surveys' in Maynard *et al.*'s (2002) recent publication.

laughter; post-sequence laughter; volunteered or invited laughter; reciprocated or non-reciprocated laughter; and 'pseudo-laughter', such as smiles and 'quasi-laughs'. Respondent laughter is an important phenomenon:

*laughter* on the part of a respondent raises what is perhaps the central dilemma of the survey: how interviewers are to maintain both standardization and a proper relationship or what we will call rapport, with their respondents

Evidence from the WOC interviews suggests that respondents may initiate laughter more frequently than the interviewer. The prevalence of laughter suggests that it is an important feature of interview talk, perhaps especially between women. Some observations from the WOC data follow, but a detailed analysis of the significance of laughter in the WOC interviews is not possible here.

Laughter seems to be a common response for women being asked whether they are intending to have another baby. For example, in interviews in January 1999 and 2000 for *The Canberra Times* (Downie 1999:3, 2000:1, 2) women having given birth to the first baby of the new year were asked whether they would have another baby. All five women laughed in response, before elaborating their answers. In the WOC interviews laughter was also a common response to some questions for women of all ages and stages of childbearing.

Politeness strategies are another type feature of interviews. Interviewers use politeness strategies as a way of indicating that the respondent is not forced to participate in the survey and ensuring that the relationship does not become too intimate. They maintain politeness with the aim of completing the interview without trouble, as instructed during interviewer training (AIFS 1998:31; Keats 2000:40–4). In the following interview segment, Annie prefaces her question to make it more polite:

### Segment 3.39

117. Int:           and a::h do you mind me asking was it the failure  
118.               of a contraception method,

[MMPH#18:117–8]

In asking Coral about the reasons for her 'bad luck' in becoming pregnant, Annie prefaces her probe for another reason with 'and a::h do you mind me asking ...' (line 117). By asking the question in an indirect way, Annie is making a polite approach to her

respondent (Brown and Levinson 1987:129ff), again showing her concern not to alienate the respondent on what might be seen as a sensitive issue.<sup>60</sup> This way interviewers can do their best to keep respondents in the survey.

At some stages in the WOC lack of affiliation—*disaffiliation*—is evident.<sup>61</sup> Lack of affiliation between participants may be apparent in the way that neither agrees with the other's summary, as found by Drew and Holt (1998) in their analysis of figurative expressions and topic transitions. When there is disagreement, interaction over a topic becomes longer (Drew and Holt 1998:512). A similar phenomenon occurs in survey interviews between interviewer and respondent, as noted earlier (Segments 3.28, 3.30, 3.31, 3.33, 3.35, and 3.38). Further examples of this lack of affiliation are discussed, particularly in Chapters 6 and 7.

Apologising is also common in the WOC interviews. In their study of telephone interviews conducted for a public-opinion polling service, Bean and Johnstone (1994:60) found that:

overt expressions of genuine regret for personal offense are rarely relevant in this speech event. Instead, it is the need for professional *discourse task management* that accounts for most of the *I'm sorrys* and related expressions.

---

<sup>60</sup> This is an example of a 'negative politeness strategy'. Brown and Levinson (1987) address this kind of 'negative politeness' in explaining their model of strategies for doing face-threatening acts. Negative politeness 'performs the function of minimizing the particular imposition that the FTA [face-threatening act] unavoidably effects'. It is the 'heart of respect behaviour', and questioning (rather than assuming that the addressee is willing to do something) is one of its linguistic realisations (Brown and Levinson 1987:129–30). It is a useful strategy for increasing rather than minimising social distance, for not coercing the addressee and giving her the option not to do what is requested. As Brown and Levinson (1987:130) note, it is 'likely to be used whenever a speaker wants to put a social brake on to the course of his [sic] interaction'.

<sup>61</sup> Laughter is a significant characteristic of the interaction on Question 167, for example. Laughter is common when the respondent gives an initial answer that indicates that she did not determine the timing of her first child. Kerry, Joanne, Liz, Karen and Helen initiate laughter with their answer or follow their answer with laughter; Annie follows. Where Karen laughs, Annie does not follow. In Edith's and Debra's case Annie laughed first. The respondent's laughter may be an indication of affiliation here. Because she cannot answer the question as the interviewer asks it, the communication is in jeopardy. Laughter appears to be one way of indicating a willingness to continue the interview. It may also be embarrassment at not being seen to be in control of her fertility, as it is assumed in the question that she has determined the timing of the first child and will be able to tell the interviewer the reason. This might partly explain the occurrence of laughter more among the older women, as contraception and methods of family planning may not have been so familiar to them when they were first married.

'I'm sorry', or 'sorry' was found to fit along a continuum, 'with the most automatic, routinized apologies at one end and the most personal and heartfelt at the other' (Bean and Johnstone 1994:62). Accomplishing the task smoothly includes:

techniques for requesting repetition, when a speaker needs to know exactly what was said; techniques for announcing errors in delivery, when speakers' exact wording matters; techniques for accepting or rejecting the format of another's turn, when the format is crucial; techniques for keeping the floor while talk is being recorded or encoded, for announcing interruptions and getting back to the task at hand after them, for probing for the required information or turn format and so on (Bean and Johnstone 1994:66).

Bean and Johnstone noted that interviewers used far more apology forms than did respondents. They suggested two reasons for this: first, that the interviewer was responsible for managing the flow of turns and topics and, second, interviewers were imposing on respondents in 'unsolicited "cold calls" ', requiring them to be 'very polite just to keep the interaction going at all' (Bean and Johnstone 1994:79). In Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of face-saving strategies for both speaker and addressee, apologising is another key strategy in being negatively polite (Brown and Levinson 1987:187–190). Segments 3.8, 3.31 and 3.35 illustrate these types of apology.

Sometimes both interviewer and respondent apologise. This kind of double apology is illustrated in this incomplete segment from Noelle's interview:

### Segment 3.40

107. Int:                    what determined the timing of your first child.  
108. Noelle:                what did i- sorry?  
109. Int:                    >sorry< what determined the timing of your first child.  
110. (0.3)  
111. Noelle:                u:m (1.3) because (.) i wanted to.

[MMPH#16:107–11]

This interaction shows the double 'sorry' (lines 88–9): an apology from Noelle, indicating a mishearing and need for repetition, followed by an apology from Annie.

### 3.4.3 *Frames*

Various terms and concepts related to 'frames' are used by scholars from a range of disciplines. Fisher (1997) argues that the term is used to refer to a variety of disjointed and incompatible concepts. In Fisher's view, frames should be defined as semi-structured elements of discourse which people use to make sense of the information they encounter.

Goffman's (1974; 1981) work develops the notion of interpretive 'frame' in the sense of the 'alignments' that people take up to each other in face-to-face interaction. That is, people use interpretive frames to interpret what they are *doing* when they talk to each other. Are they joking, lecturing, or arguing? Is it a fight or is it play? Tannen (1993a:15, 6) notes that the term 'frame' is used also in the sense of 'schema' or 'structures of expectation' associated with situations, objects and people. She uses an interactive notion of frame that refers to 'a sense of what activity is being engaged in, how speakers mean what they say' in interaction (Tannen 1993a:60). Related to 'frame' is 'footing', a term introduced by Goffman (1981) to refer to a change in our frame for events. Goffman (1981:157) notes that 'linguistics provides us with the cues and markers through which such footings become manifest, helping us to find our way to a structural basis for analyzing them'. Goffman (1981:137) also introduced the concept of 'participation frameworks', whereby 'participants have a 'participation status' relative to the words spoken, and 'all participants...are part of the participation framework for that moment of speech'.

Yet another concept involving frames is the concept of 'frame of reference'. This concept is usually used in relation to questions (Foddy 1993:76–89; Kahn and Cannell 1957:113ff). Kahn and Cannell note that survey researchers want to control the frame of reference in an interview; that is, they want to be sure that the frame of reference of the question coincides with the personal frame of reference that the respondent uses to answer it. It is also considered very important to ensure that all respondents are answering the question using the same frame of reference so that their responses are comparable. Techniques for controlling the frame of reference include learning the respondent's frame, indicating a specific frame and selecting a common frame (Kahn and Cannell 1957:113ff). Foddy (1993:76) notes the term 'response frameworks', defining the decisions respondents make in answering questions, as being similar to the

idea of ‘perspective’. The underlying insight is that it is possible for respondents to respond to topics in very many different ways. Thus, it is quite possible for the frame of the respondent to differ from the frame of the survey researcher.

Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:58–60) refers to the survey interview as a ‘complex interactive frame’ where a multiplicity of types of interaction can occur: interviewer–respondent, interviewer–questionnaire (representing the researcher), interviewer–computer monitor, interviewer–keyboard. Survey interaction consists of

a number of embedded or alternative interactive frames. This holds especially true for the interviewer. While in most cases the respondent interacts with the interviewer only, the interviewer interacts with more parties than just the respondent (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:58).

In this sense the concept of frame is related to the notion of participant roles (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:60–1), where the interviewer and respondent play a number of roles in the survey interview. These roles are sometimes interchangeable, and include asking and answering questions, relaying the information from the researcher about the meaning of a question, and being responsible for keeping a respondent in the survey for a future interview (as with NLC and the WOC interviews). The interview as a three-way interaction between three elements—interviewer, respondent and the questionnaire—is discussed by Schaeffer (1991a).

The term ‘frame’, is used in the course of this study in the sense mentioned by Kahn and Cannell (1957:113ff) in relation to question frames of reference and also in the broader sense of a ‘complex interactive frame’ as explicated by Houtkoop-Steenstra. Beike and Sherman (1998) examined framing of comparisons in questions. They found that several factors affected the way in which a question item was interpreted: order of items; context in which an item appeared; language used to express the question; type of response scale; manner in which respondent is asked to consider the question (Beike and Sherman 1998:161).

These types of frames are explicated in the type of talk that occurs in survey interviews. For example, at times during the interview, the interviewer ‘disengages’ from talk with the respondent in order to ‘engage’ with the keyboard or monitor, or in the case of the



WOC interviews to write a response on the interview schedule.<sup>62</sup> Talk that occurs during periods of disengagement in survey interviews is often quieter than the surrounding talk (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1997b, 2000:59). It can be seen as self-talk (Rendle-Short 2002:71) or as an ‘outloud’, signalling that a particular task is not complete, and that the participant is not ready to move on to a joint task (Symanski 1999). The following segment from the interview with Andrea shows this kind of talk:

### Segment 3.41

63. Andrea: yes. basically. yes.  
 64. (3.0)  
 65. Int: °°just writing (this down)°° (14.0) ((A. wrote on  
 66. questionnaire, presumably at this time: ‘Age-wanted to  
 67. have a child before getting any older’—it was not one of  
 68. the 14+ other possible reasons)) °°okay. good.°° a::nd hh  
 69. a::h how many children do you think you’ll have in the  
 70. future.

[MMPH#4:63–70]

It seems that the interviewer is achieving more than one purpose with soft talk here: keeping the respondent ‘on the line’ by maintaining some display of interaction (especially on the telephone where verbal communication is relevant), checking the response, and closing the sequence. Such a concept of interactive frame also accounts for other types of interaction that take place within the bounds of the interview, such as those mentioned in Footnote 45 of this chapter—talking to the respondent’s child about her favourite TV programme, for example.

## 3.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined some of the key features of interaction in standardised survey interviews: turn-taking and sequence organisation, the organisation of repair system, and the construction and design of turns. Some other features of talk in interaction relevant to interviews, such as affiliation and frames, have also been briefly introduced. Many features of interaction have not been mentioned, some because they do not relate directly to the interviews situation and others for reasons of space. These are discussed as required in later chapters. The following four chapters examine interaction in the

---

<sup>62</sup> See Rendle-Short (2002:Ch.3) for a discussion of engagement and disengagement in computer-science seminars.

WOC interviews in the light of these features of interaction. The first of these chapters, Chapter 4, examines the way in which the interviewer delivers the questions and the responses to them from the respondents.

## Questions and responses in the *Women on Children* interviews

---

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the survey questions asked in the *Women on Children* (WOC) survey. The focus of the chapter is the way the question–answer stage<sup>63</sup> of the WOC interviews proceeded; that is, how the interviewer delivered the survey questions written on the interview schedule, how the respondents responded, and whether the questions ‘worked’. Interviewer–respondent interaction is, therefore, an important consideration here, as well as how the interviewer recorded the responses on the interview schedule. However, the overview purpose of the chapter means that the detail of each question cannot be explored here. Subsequent chapters examine in more detail the content of responses to questions, and how interaction and responses relate to the concerns of demographers. This chapter uses as a starting point the scripted questions with their pre-determined response categories on the interview schedule. It then examines the varied ways in which the interviewer, Annie, asked the 27 respondents each standardised scripted question and the responses recorded for them. Responses are shown for each question, as coded on the interview schedule by the interviewer. Scripted questions are discussed individually in this chapter; the full questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 2.

The questions for the WOC Survey were taken from *Negotiating the Life Course* (NLC), as discussed in Chapter 2. The original question numbers have been retained for the purposes of possible comparison between the WOC Survey and the three waves of the NLC survey. Because the WOC questions were purposively selected, the numbers are then not consecutive, starting with Question 20 and finishing with Question 194. About

---

<sup>63</sup> The question–answer stage is the stage of the interview after the interviewer’s introduction when she asks the questions on the interview schedule, listens to the respondent’s answer and records the responses on the interview schedule. This stage finishes with the completion of the final question. The introductory

10 questions were asked, depending on which questions or question variants were relevant for a particular respondent and which skips were made. Skips are indicated below, together with the questions to which they apply.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the terms ‘answer’ and ‘response’ are used to refer to different aspects of the interview, following Houtkoop-Steenstra’s (2000:109) distinction between the terms. This distinction is important in this chapter. The term ‘answer’ refers to what the women say in responding to the interviewer’s questions. ‘Response’, on the other hand, refers to the ‘response’ written on the interview schedule according to the pre-determined ‘response options’ or ‘response categories’. An ‘answer’, therefore, is not necessarily formatted in terms of allowable response options. Quotation marks are used to enclose the respondent’s exact words. Response options are given in bold italics.

As with Chapter 3 and subsequent chapters, conversation analysis (CA) transcription conventions have been used to transcribe the interview segments cited.<sup>64</sup> As mentioned in earlier chapters, this method of transcription shows in minute detail the interaction between interviewer and respondent and allows identification of issues that arise in the interaction that are of interest to demographers, survey methodologists and conversation analysts. Conversation analysts are likely to see much more in the segments shown than is covered in the discussion, and demographers may question the need for such detailed transcription. The CA practice of letting the interactional data speak for themselves (Whalen 1992:304) is followed in this chapter, with segments from the interviews shown first, followed by discussion. The criteria for selection of segments from the interviews are those useful for both conversation analytic and demographic purposes; that is, segments are chosen to show problematic and unproblematic interaction. For survey designers this is useful in that it highlights difficulties that can arise with question wording, phrasing or intonation, and, more broadly, differing frames of reference of respondent and interviewer. For conversation analysts both problematic and unproblematic interaction provides rich data.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Annie, the WOC interviewer was considered by her employers to be a good interviewer. The following analysis of her delivery of questions

---

and closing stages of the interview are not discussed here, although some references may be made to these stages also.

<sup>64</sup> See Appendix 3 for a list of transcription conventions.

shows that she does not always observe the conventional practices of standardised interviewing in general, or the Australian Institute of Family Studies guidelines for CATI<sup>65</sup> interviewers in particular (AIFS 1998:23–8). The AIFS CATI Interviewer Manual states:

It is essential that all interviews are conducted identically to ensure uniformity and reliability of results. You must always be **impartial**...Always ask the questions exactly as they are worded, in the same order as indicated by the screen, and never skip a question. When a respondent does not understand a question, repeat it as it has been written, perhaps slowing your delivery slightly, but do not try to explain the question (AIFS 1998:23).

Previous research, discussed at the end of this chapter following the analysis of WOC questions, has already shown that Annie is not unusual. Standardised interviewing is virtually impossible, and that interviewers contravene the rules much of the time (Fowler and Mangione 1990:37; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2000; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki 1997; Maynard and Schaeffer 1997; Schaeffer 1991a; Schaeffer and Maynard 1996; Suchman and Jordan 1990a).

## 4.1 The WOC questions

### 4.1.1 *Question 20*

The first question for the interviewer is scripted as follows:

<b>Q20: Are you married or in a relationship?</b>	
<b>(Are you living with your partner?)</b>	
Not presently in a relationship	1
In a relationship with someone but not living with that person	2
Living with someone in a relationship but not legally married to that person	3
Married and living with husband	4

Table 4.1 shows the responses for this question.

<sup>65</sup> CATI is the acronym for ‘computer-assisted telephone interviewing’.

**Table 4.1      Respondent's relationship status, 1998**

Relationship status	N
Not presently in a relationship	6
In a relationship but not living with that person	1
Living with someone in a relationship but not legally married	3
Married and living with husband	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

Source: WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

Segment 4.1<sup>66</sup> shows the most common pattern of interaction between the respondent and the interviewer for Q20:

#### Segment 4.1 Edith

40. Int:                    SO now, the first u:m question is, are you married or in  
41.                            a relationship.  
42. Edith:                married.  
43. Int:                    °and living with your husband°  
44. Edith:                yes

[MMPH#17:40–4]

The interaction tends to go smoothly in the case of the 17 respondents who, like Edith, were married and living with their husbands. The way the interviewer asks the question in this segment is as one intonational phrase 'are you married or in a relationship.' This means that it becomes a yes–no question,<sup>67</sup> to which the expected answer is 'yes' or 'no' (as long as the response options are not given to the respondent). The answer options on the interview schedule, however, are not 'yes' or 'no', but various types of relationship status; the question is, thus, a request for information. If Annie is lucky, the respondent treats it as a request for information rather than responding simply 'yes' or 'no', so that she can fill in the form without having to ask further questions. Respondents frequently give more than 'yes' or 'no' as an answer to a yes–no question (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:65). Thus, Edith's response 'married.' means that Annie can go straight on and ask whether she is living with her husband. In all cases where the respondent is married, Annie departs from the wording of the question, using 'husband'

<sup>66</sup> In order to focus attention on the question itself and to isolate it from the preceding and following questions, I have not followed the CA convention of showing lines before and after the segment of interest. This has entailed cutting off segments in the middle of lines, rather than at the beginning or the end, where excluded material relates to a preceding or following question.

<sup>67</sup> A yes–no question is one to which the grammatically preferred answer is 'yes' or 'no'.

instead of ‘partner’ (although ‘husband’ is a response option, the respondent does not know this). Where the respondent is in a relationship but not married (Coral and Lyn), Annie uses the words ‘someone’—the term in the response option on the form—or ‘the person’ (Chrissy), and only in the case of Jess does she use the word ‘partner’, the term in the question (Jess corrects Annie again through the interview when she uses the term ‘husband’).

However, in the cases where the respondent treats the question as a yes–no question rather than as a request for information, and also answers ‘yes’, Annie has to ask another question to obtain the information. She has to ask again whether the respondent is married or whether she is in a relationship (that is, which of the alternatives applies) before she can fill in the response on the form. This is because the question can be treated as asking about one category ‘married/in a relationship vs. single’ or a second category: ‘living with partner vs. not living with a partner’. Respondents can treat the question as referring to a single category only or to both. In the case of Carol, this ambiguity in the question causes confusion:

#### Segment 4.2 Carol

28. Int: the first question is, are you married or in a  
 29. relationship.  
 30. Carol: yes.  
 31. Int: married and?  
 32. Carol: a-=  
 33. Int: =or-  
 34. Carol: married.  
 35. Int: >and living with your husband.<  
 36. Carol: ↑yes

[MMPH#15:28–36]

The interaction between Carol and Annie over this question is not straightforward and repair work needs to be done before Annie can fill in the correct relationship status option.<sup>68</sup> Carol answers ‘yes’ to the question, and Annie gives ‘married and?’ as a candidate answer (line 30). This is how Annie usually introduces the next question ‘and living with your husband?’ in other interviews, but here she does not continue after ‘and?’ She corrects herself to ‘or-’ (line 33), the continuation of the original question. Carol responds with ‘married.’ thus confirming Annie’s candidate answer. The ambiguity in the question means that Annie still has to clarify whether Carol is married or living in

a relationship before she can ask about whether she is living with her husband. It is possible that the ambiguity in this question could be removed by making it clear that the question was asking about two alternatives; for example, rephrasing the question to ‘Are you married, or are you in a relationship?’ A small pause between the two options may make it clearer for the respondent. As delivered by Annie according to the interview schedule, however, it is a yes–no question.

A further difficulty arises because in all cases when the respondent answers ‘yes’, Annie’s candidate answer is ‘married’. Mostly, the candidate answer is acceptable to the respondent, because most of the respondents are married, but it is a problem for respondents, such as Coral, who were in a relationship but not married:

#### Segment 4.3 Coral

22. Int:           okay. now. are you married or in a relationship.  
23. Coral:       yes.  
24. Int:           married. and °living with your husband?°  
25. Coral:       a:::h de facto?  
26. Int:           >oh sorry.< living with someone in a de facto  
27.               relation[ship].  
28. Coral:       [that's right

[MMPH#18:22–28]

Here, as in the interview with Coral, Annie asks the question with the intonation of a yes–no question, to which Coral responds ‘yes’. Annie gives a candidate answer ‘married.’ and asks the follow-up question immediately: ‘and °living with your husband?°’. Coral’s long hesitation ‘ah:::’ indicates her difficulty in answering this. Annie’s candidate answer is incorrect. Her response ‘de facto?’ avoids a direct response to the question of whether she is married or not and corrects Annie’s use of ‘husband’. Annie quickly apologises and rephrases her formulation to suit Coral’s situation.

Where the response is ‘no’, Annie does not have to ask whether the respondent is living with her husband; however, with two of the three respondents who answered ‘no’—Ricky and Melinda—Annie uses an additional statement to check her information. Segment 4.4 shows the interaction for this question in Melinda’s interview:

---

<sup>68</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.3.



#### Segment 4.4 Melinda

27. Int:           [↑now] (.) are you married or in a  
28. Melinda:     [↑yep]  
29. Int:           relationship.  
30. Melinda:     <sup>o</sup>t! <sup>o</sup> no.  
31. Int:           not at the mo[ment  
32. Melinda:                           [not at the moment, no.

[MMPH#16:27–32]

It is interesting that Annie only uses this checking response ‘not at the moment’ (line 31) with respondents not in a relationship—with five of the six respondents in this situation—and that the checking consists of a time check, ‘not at the moment’, even though the verb in the question, ‘are’, is unambiguously present tense. This question appears to be Annie checking her understanding, but she does not ask married respondents or respondents in a relationship whether they are married or in a relationship ‘at the moment’. Thus, Annie implies that not being in a relationship may be a temporary state for these respondents. It appears to be an assessment of the respondent’s situation. Melinda agrees with the assessment.<sup>69</sup>

With two respondents, Annegret and Tonia, Annie does not ask whether they are living with their husbands. According to the interview schedule, the question is still relevant in their cases because they responded ‘married’. Whereas survey methodologists assume that interview participants operate with no common knowledge (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:67), sometimes knowledge is shared during the interview that later becomes relevant. For example, Tonia has already mentioned her husband in the context of handing over the baby while she does the interview. Annie takes this into account in her delivery of the questions—as she would be expected to do in ordinary conversation—inferring that Tonia’s husband lives with her. In Annegret’s case, no reason is evident in the interview for the omission of this question; however, Annie made a couple of calls to Annegret before reaching her and may have known or assumed that the man answering the phone was Annegret’s husband and that he lived there. Here, Annie is being a co-operative participant in the interaction, according to Grice’s maxims.<sup>70</sup> In conversation

---

<sup>69</sup> Pomerantz (1984a:65–70) notes that agreements with assessments can be in the form of ‘upgrades’, ‘same evaluations’ or ‘downgrades’. Melinda’s assessment here is a ‘same evaluation’, where the assessment of the second speaker is the same as that of the first.

<sup>70</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.4.1 on recipient design and Grice’s (1975, 1989) co-operative principle.

speakers are expected to design their talk with reference to what they know that their recipients already know (Sacks 1995:Vol.2, p.564). Annie is designing her turn to suit the respondents: through the interaction that has already occurred they have implied and she has inferred that their husbands are present in the household. In doing so, she is not doing what is expected by the designer of the survey, but combining conversational principles with the rules for survey interviewing.

In Sonya's and Kristen's cases Annie asks this question as a statement simply requiring confirmation: 'and living with your husband'. Interviewer manuals advise against this way of asking a question because it is biased toward a 'yes' answer (Fowler and Mangione 1990:40; Gorden 1969:214–20; Keats 2000). It is easier for the interviewer, however, to probe in this way, because the question can usually be resolved more efficiently as a result (Fowler and Mangione 1990:44).

Lyn is the only respondent to ask for the definition of 'a relationship':

#### Segment 4.5 Lyn

18. Int: oh oka(h)y hh huh huh ·hh ↑now- a:h the first question is are
19. you married or in a relationship.
20. Lyn: a:h what's the definition of a relationship.
21. Int: 0H- if you:'re (.) in a relationship with someone <ei:the:r>
22. >living with them or not living with them< however you define
23. (the relationship)
24. Lyn: ah ↑yes<sub>2</sub> i'm not living with someone now, [but i-
25. Int: [but you're in a
26. relationship.
27. Lyn: °yes°
28. Int: °so you're in a relationship with someone but not living with
29. that person.°
30. Lyn: ↑yep<sub>2</sub>
31. Int: °good° ·hh now, how many children have you ever had.

[MMPH#2:18–31]

Annie gives Lyn a broad definition of 'being in a relationship' that gives the respondent the choice of deciding whether she is in a relationship or not. In line 25 Annie starts her turn at a possible completion point in Lyn's turn. She answers for Lyn, completing her sentence: 'but you're in a relationship.' Lyn stops speaking. This fits the conventions of normal conversation, where if two speakers are talking at the same time, one will stop (Sacks *et al.* 1974:706, as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.1). However, what Lyn might have been going to say is lost in favour of the interviewer's response which fits neatly

into the response option on the form: 'In a relationship with someone but not living with that person'.

Annie gives an assessment 'good' after Lyn's information (line 31), closing off the question and making it possible to move on to the next. Rather than being an assessment of Lyn's relationship, it seems to assess the process of coding—Annie's satisfaction at obtaining a response after a longer interaction than most to resolve this question. Interviewers are generally expected not to give assessments,<sup>71</sup> but in ordinary conversation assessments, or evaluations, are an accepted part of interaction (Pomerantz 1984a). Goodwin and Goodwin (1992:) show that assessments play a role in bringing a sequence to a close. Here, Annie gives an assessment, closing the question–answer sequence and continues with the next question.

Question 20, then, does not always yield unproblematic interaction. For respondents who fit the most common pattern among the WOC respondents—women who are married and living with their husbands—few problems arise. However, for those few respondents who are not in this situation, such as Lyn, Melinda and Coral, some difficulties arise that have to be resolved before Annie can fill in the response options. In general, it may be difficult for the respondent when assumptions are made about her relationship status, as in Coral's case; or information from the respondent herself may be lost, as in Lyn's case. The interviewer's behaviour may differ in these cases also, as when Annie checked the responses of respondents who were not in a relationship with the time phrase 'at the moment' or 'now'. So, for respondents whose relationship status is not the common pattern assumed by the question (the question does not ask 'Are you single?' or 'Are you separated?' for example), the ambiguities in the question itself can complicate achieving a response.

---

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.2.2 *Assessments*.

4.1.2 Question 154

The second WOC question, Q154, is scripted as follows:

Q154: How many children have you ever had?  
(If 0, skip to Q159)

□□

Table 4.2 shows the responses for this question.

Table 4.2 Number of children respondents had ever had, 1998

Number of children	Number of respondents
None	3
One	2
Two	10
Three	3
Four	9
Total	27

Source: WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

For most respondents this question was not at all problematic. The response came immediately after the question, with no gap and no sign of hesitation, as in the case of Noelle:

Segment 4.6 Noelle

36. Int: and (.) how many children have you ever had.
37. Noelle: two.

[MMPH#14:36–7]

However, some interviews do not proceed smoothly at this point. One respondent, Kristen, gave a response that required some clarification on Annie’s part. The segment from Kristen’s interview, although discussed in Chapter 3, is used here to illustrate the problem for respondents of fitting the situation of miscarriage to Q154:

Segment 4.7 Kristen

26. Int: and er how many children have you ever had.
27. Kristen: two: and i’ve lost one.
28. Int: °right° so you’ve actually er had three children.
29. (0.6)
30. Kristen: hh we:ll the other one was only about eight weeks, so
31. i dunno whether that [counts.

32. Int: [no (it doesn't)  
 33. Kristen: oh. i don't know. how it goes,  
 34. Int: ↑oh ↑well we sort of ask how many (.) children you've  
 35. actually given birth to [(so )]  
 36. Kristen: [oh. right. well that's two.  
 37. Int: °that's two altogether°.  
 38. Kristen: yeah  
 39. Int: ↑oh sorry. i thought- i see what you're saying  
 40. (° °)  
 41. Kristen: yeah

[MMPH#6:26-41]

It was unclear from Kristen's response whether the 'eight weeks' mentioned in line 30 was eight weeks into the pregnancy or eight weeks after the birth. It was not explicitly stated during the interview that Kristen had had a miscarriage, but at line 36 Kristen says 'oh. right. well that's two.' thus clarifying that she has actually given birth to two children, Annie infers that the 'eight weeks' (line 30) meant that Kristen had had a miscarriage at eight weeks. The confusion here about whether to count Kristen's miscarriage was also evident in the interview with Lyn. On the interview schedule for Lyn Annie wrote next to the response boxes 'had one miscarriage also.' Even though Lyn did not give this as an answer to Q154, the information emerged later in response to Q167. Whether miscarriages should be counted was clearly dealt with by Annie when she spoke with Kristen and the information was not recorded. However, she recorded the information for Lyn.

Some other respondents showed hesitation in their responses; Andrea's and Tonia's responses are shown in Segments 4.8 and 4.9:

#### Segment 4.8 Andrea

27. Int: a:nd how many children have you ever had.  
 28. (2.0)  
 29. Andrea: a::h two=>and i've got one on the way¿<  
 30. Int: two¿ °okay¿°

[MMPH#4:27-30]

Andrea paused for two seconds before answering, a long pause in conversational terms (Jefferson 1989) but not so long in an interview.<sup>72</sup> The 'a::h' that precedes and delays Andrea's answer, however, indicates a 'thinking' delay (Goodwin and Goodwin 1986). Andrea's situation is unlike that of the other women in this survey in that she is currently

<sup>72</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.2.4 *Pauses, gaps and lapses*

pregnant. Perhaps she was thinking about whether being currently pregnant counted as having had a child. Tonia's situation is different again:

#### Segment 4.9 Tonia

44. Int: and (.) ↑how many children have you ever had.  
45. Tonia u:m (.) i've ha:d (.) four children.  
46. Int: °four children.°

[MMPH#5:44–46]

Tonia hesitates with u:m, lengthens her words 'u:m' and 'ha:d', and pauses twice. The question required more thought for her. Later in the interview, in her answer to Q155 (segment not shown), it emerged that her first child died at the age of seven months. Whether this led Tonia to hesitate in her response, we cannot know. However, most respondents responded immediately with no gap and no hesitation.

Chrissy's response is interesting because it occasions a checking response from Annie when the response given is more than clear:

#### Segment 4.10 Chrissy

24. Int: °oka:y.° ·hh now (.) how many children have you ever  
25. had.  
26. Chrissy: i have never had any.  
27. Int: °zero?°  
28. Chrissy: zero.

[MMPH#3:24–8]

Chrissy has had no children of her own. Her husband has a child from a previous relationship and also brought up two children that were not his biological children but his former wife's (Segment 4.17). This information was obtained from Chrissy later in the interview.

Two respondents, Dale and Jess, had given birth to their first child a few months before the WOC Survey. Both respondents also gave a response that included more than a number—in Jess's case: 'this is the first.' and in Dale's case 'just one'. Segment 4.11 shows Jess's response:

### Segment 4.11 Jess

31. Int: (°a:nd how many children have you ever had.°)  
32. Jess: this is the first.  
33. Int: oh. just the first one  
34. Jess: mm hm

[MMPh#9:31-4]

Jess's answer refers to her child as 'the first', using an ordinal number rather than the cardinal 'one'. Annie acknowledges Jess's information with 'oh', a sequence-closing third. However, she adds an assessment to this: 'just the first one', taking up Jess's inference that this is the first of a series. Jess gives a minimal response.

Most women do not have to think about how many children they have *now*; this is shown by the fact that there is no pause and no gap before their response to Question 154, as in Noelle's interview. Women whose children are all still alive and who have not experienced miscarriages or infant deaths have no difficulty in responding as expected. However, the women in the WOC Survey whose situation is unclear in relation to the terms of the question, seem to take time to think or prolong their response in some way. There seems to be a difference in women's answers between 'having had and still having' a child, 'having had but no longer having' a child, and 'currently being about to have' a child. This was the case for Tonia who had lost a baby seven months after birth, Kristen who had had a miscarriage, and Andrea who was pregnant. From the perspective of CA methodology, it is not possible to speculate on the reasons for people's behaviour; it is not possible to 'get inside their heads'. Talk becomes the point of departure (Goodwin and Heritage 1990:286-7; ten Have 1999:34). So, we cannot draw conclusions about the reasons for the delayed responses of these women, but it is of interest that these interactional features occur in these particular interviews. The question is more complex than it appears at first asking.

4.1.3 Question 155

Question 155 was closely related to Question 154, in that it requested information on the respondent’s children.

**Q155: Can you tell me their name, sex, month and year of birth?**  
(Eldest first in order of birth)

Ch.	Name	Sex	Month born	Year born	Is this child living with you now?	Are you the biological parent/s of this child?
					Here..... 1 Deceased..... 2 Elsewhere..... 3	Our child (both parents in hhold) 1 My child..... 2 Partner’s child..... 3 .Adopted/foster/other... 4
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

Source: WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

A full table of response options is not given here for reasons of length.

Q155 was not asked of those who had not given birth: Chrissy, Tina, and Beverly; nor was the bracketed section ‘(Eldest first in order of birth)’ asked of Annegret, Jess or Dale who had given birth to only one child. The bracketed section of the question, when it was asked, was delivered in various ways by the interviewer. In the majority of instances, Annie added the words ‘from eldest to youngest’ to the question. Sometimes the words added varied slightly: ‘from the eldest to the youngest’ (Helen) or ‘from oldest to youngest’ (Sonya, Tonia), and for Kristen: ‘of your eldest child to your youngest child’. Annie asked each child separately in the case of Andrea: ‘a:nd what’s the name and sex and month and year of birth of your eldest child.’ and ‘a:nd what about your next (.)



child.’ for the second child (segments not shown). Whatever the wording, the intent of the question remained essentially the same, and, from their (mostly) unproblematic answers, was interpreted the same way by respondents. Although the question is scripted as a yes–no question, respondents do not simply answer ‘yes’ and ‘no’. They supply the information inferred by the question.

In most cases the responses were straightforward, as illustrated by this segment from Melinda’s interview:

#### Segment 4.12 Melinda

34. Int: (° °) can you tell me their names, sex, month,  
 35. and year of birth. from eldest to youngest.  
 36. Melinda: um (.) Amy, (1.0) um >do you want the middle name as  
 37. well?<  
 38. Int: oh don't worry [(Amy's fine)  
 39. Melinda: [no middle name? °right°,  
 40. Int: um (°Amy°) and what [month and year was she born.  
 41. Melinda: [hh  
 42. Melinda: um (.) April, eighty two, hh  
 43. Int: (°April eighty two°) and is [she living with you now?  
 44. Melinda: [an-  
 45. Melinda: she is,  
 46. Int: and (.) is sh::e:: you:r chi:::ld.  
 47. Melinda: yes  
 48. Int: °right° [um ] (.) and what about the youngest child.  
 49. Melinda: [·hh]  
 50. Melinda: the youngest one's Erin, ((spelling name)) (0.6) and  
 51. she's a female as well, [she- ] she's November eighty=  
 52. Int: [( )]  
 53. Melinda: =three,  
 54. Int: is she living with you now?  
 55. Melinda: yes she is,  
 56. Int: (°and she's also your biological child [too.°)  
 57. Melinda: [°yes°

[MMPH#16:34–57]

Q155 is a long question, asking for several pieces of information: name, sex, month and year of birth. It is not closely scripted for each child on the interview schedule. Annie asks the question in full the first time over several turns. Melinda provides each piece of information. When it comes to the second child, Annie does not re-ask the question in the same way. Melinda gives the information without being asked. All the information for the question is obtained as required by the interview schedule. In this case, unlike some later questions, the outcome appears not to depend particularly on how the question is asked.

It appears from the transcribed interview data that women are expected to know their children's and their partner's children's details. If not, they are accountable; that is, some explanation needs to be given. This is clear from the interviews with Chrissy (Segment 4.16) and Coral (Segment 4.18). Some respondents hesitated or stumbled in giving the dates of birth of their children. Edith, for example, was confused about the date of birth of her third child (Segment 4.13 below). Kristen was confused about the particular decade. None of this confusion or hesitation, which also occurred in other interviews, appeared to be of much consequence to the factual information that emerged, but it has implications for the smoothness of the interaction, indicating some trouble. In general, where it occurred, both interviewer and respondent repaired the interaction with laughter, as in Edith's case.<sup>73</sup> Lyn was also the only respondent to mention that her children spent time with their father.

When the respondent had had more than one or two children (22 of the 27 interviews), asking and answering all the questions separately for each child often became tedious. Both respondent and interviewer took shortcuts to speed the process. This shortcutting is evident in the interview with Edith, where Annie pre-empts the responses to some questions:

#### Segment 4.13 Edith<sup>74</sup>

47. Int: ( ) can you tell me their names, sex, month, and  
 48. year of birth from eldest to youngest.  
 49. Edith: °yes u::m° name? did you want?  
 50. Int: [yes ( )  
 51. Edith: [·hh um (.) Wilson,  
 52. Int: (°he's a boy°)  
 53. Edith: yes  
 54. Int: and (.) what month and year was he born.  
 55. Edith: a::h (.) the eleventh of the eleventh, nineteen eighty,  
 56. Int: °nineteen eighty?° and does he live with you now?  
 57. Edith: ye- a:h yes  
 58. Int: and-  
 59. Edith: you were just speaking to him  
 60. [(he answered the phone) hhh  
 61. Int: [°oh goo[d° ( )  
 62. Edith: [hh[hh  
 63. Int: [and are you and your husband both the  
 64. biological parents [(of Wilson)  
 65. Edith: [yes.

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.4.2 *Affiliation*.

<sup>74</sup> In lines 92–6 of this transcript a pseudonym, 'Jaynie', is used for Edith's daughter. Thus, where Edith spells her daughter's real name (line 96), no spelling is included, for reasons of confidentiality. This also applies to Segment 4.14, where 'Chris' is a pseudonym, and Noelle spells the real name.

66. Int: and (.) what about your next child.  
 67. Edith: a::h (.) Penelope;  
 68. Int: (°°Penelope. she's a girl°°)  
 69. Edith: °yes°  
 70. Int: what month and year was she born.  
 71. Edith: twenty second of the ninth, a::h (.) nineteen eighty  
 72. two,  
 73. Int: (°right°) and does she live with you still  
 74. Edith: yes  
 75. Int: and (.) (are both you and your husband  
 76. the bio[logical parents)  
 77. Edith: [yes  
 78. Int: (°°and your next child°°)  
 79. Edith: a::h Drew;  
 80. Int: °°Drew°°  
 81. Edith: °a:h° the seventeenth of the tenth,  
 82. Int: (°°October°°)  
 83. Edith: ninetee::n ei::ghty:: t! t! t! hh >help me< five, huh  
 84. [huh = huh huh huh huh ] hhh [huh  
 85. Int: [hah hah hah hah hah ] [and does he live with you  
 86. [now?  
 87. Edith: [.hh \$yes\$  
 88. Int: \$and (.) both you and your husband are the biological  
 89. pa[rents\$  
 90. Edith: [\$ye(h)s\$  
 91. Int: \$oka(h)y, and the next one.\$  
 92. Edith: a:h (.) Jaynie,  
 93. Int: sorr[y?=  
 94. Edith: [J- Jaynie,  
 95. Int: °°>how do you spell it<°°  
 96. Edith: ((spells name))  
 97. Int: (°right. and she's a girl?°)  
 98. Edith: yes  
 99. Int: and (.) the month and year that she was born.  
 100. Edith: <twenty: seventh of the first, ninetee::n eighty seven>  
 101. Int: and is she living with you now?  
 102. Edith: yes  
 103. Int: and (both you and your husband are the biological  
 104. parents)

[MMPH#17:47-104]

Here, Annie pre-empts the respondent's answer (lines 88, 103), putting a statement to Edith that expects a confirmation—that Edith and her husband are the biological parents of her third and fourth children as for her first and second. Sometimes it is the respondent who pre-empts the answer. Both Karen with three children and Noelle with two telescope their answers or answer two questions at once:

#### Segment 4.14 Noelle

53. Int: and what about your (youngest) child.  
 54. Noelle: it's Chris ((spells)), (1.0) and that's- ah-  
 55. twelve ninety two.  
 56. Int: ( )  
 57. Noelle: and ↑yes and yes.

[MMPH#14:53-7]

The way this question was asked was, in general, not problematic. Although it sometimes led to a long interaction when respondents had several children, the interaction went smoothly except when respondents could not straight away remember the details of their children's birth dates.

4.1.4 Question 159

(if Q20=1 or 2, skip to Q164, i.e. do not ask about husband/partner's children)	
<b>Q159: Does your husband/partner have any children from any previous relationship?</b>	
Yes	1
No	2 (skip to Q164)

Table 4.3 shows the outcomes for this question.

Table 4.3 Children from previous relationship of respondent's partner, 1998

Children from partner's previous relationship(s)	Number of respondents
Yes	3
No	17
Question not asked	7
	27

Source: WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

Question 159 was not asked of seven respondents, as prescribed by the question schedule: those who were not in a relationship (Ricky, Tina, Melinda, Nadia, Kerry, and Beverly) or not living with their partner (Lyn). Of the remaining 20 respondents, three—Chrissy, Noelle and Coral—had a partner or husband with children from a previous relationship. A segment from Coral's interview follows:

Segment 4.15 Coral

58. Int: and does your partner have any children from any
59. previous relationship?
60. Coral: yes:

[MMPH#18:58–60]

The interaction here is smooth. Coral's response comes immediately, and the interviewer then moves on to ask the next question. As with Coral, Chrissy's partner has children. In this case, the interaction is longer:

### Segment 4.16 Chrissy

29. Int: a:nd has your partne:r (1.0) >had any children.<  
 30. Chrissy: yes he [has.  
 31. Int: [°how many children.°  
 32. Chrissy: he has three.  
 33. Int: °oka:y°. a:[nd how many-]  
 34. Chrissy: [but two ] a:h (.) well (.) biologically  
 35. one and two (1.3) were (.) his (.) previous wife's  
 36. children.  
 37. Int: ↓ri:ght. and he: ha:s  
 38. Chrissy: one. (.) biologically but he brought the others up.  
 39. [they're  
 40. Int: [oh okay. so

[MMPH#3:29-40]

Annie does not ask this question as written on the interview schedule. She then asks another question that was not in the schedule at all—°how many children.°—and, after Annie starts to ask another question (line 33), Chrissy goes on to elaborate on her previous answer 'he has three.' It is not clear from the question on the schedule whether 'children' means 'biological children' only. Chrissy makes this distinction in her response.

Some of the women whose husbands or partners did not have children from a previous relationship gave qualified answers or quite definite 'no' responses. Sonya's response is an example of a qualified response:

### Segment 4.17 Sonya

82. Int: ↑u:m (.) does your husband have any previous- any  
 83. children from any previous relationship.  
 84. Sonya: °no° (.) i don't think so, uh he heh heh ·huh ·huh [hh  
 85. Int: [hah  
 86. hah not that you know of=  
 87. Sonya: =\$not that i'm aware of\$ no ha ·hhh

[MMPH#7:82-7]

Sonya's response is 'no', and the interaction is also smooth. Her qualification—'i don't think so'—is followed by laughter; Annie also laughs and makes the comment 'not that you know of'. Sonya's '\$not that i'm aware of\$ no', followed by another laughter pulse, aligns her with Annie. This interaction between Annie and Sonya is an example of the kind of humour often shared by the respondents and Annie in the WOC interviews. Laughter was frequent in the interaction around many questions, as mentioned in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.4.2 on the role of laughter in interaction).

4.1.5 Question 160

**Q160: Can you tell me their name, sex, month and year of birth?**  
(Eldest first in order of birth)

Ch.	Name	Sex	Month born	Year born	Is this child living with you now?	Are you the biological parent/s of this child?
					Here..... 1 Deceased..... 2 Elsewhere..... 3	Our child (both parents in hhold) 1 My child..... 2 Partner's child..... 3 .Adopted/foster/other... 4
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

**Source:** WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

This question is similar in format and wording to Q155, except that it asks for details on the children of the partner or husband of the respondent. As with Q155, a table showing all the response options for this question is not provided. Responses are not shown for this question, again for reasons of complexity. No ‘don’t know’ option existed for either of these questions. Like Q155, Q160 is a request for information phrased as a yes–no question, technically requiring only a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. The three respondents answering this question did not take it at face value, providing the information sought, rather than answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Two of the three respondents answering Q160 had to ask their partner or husband about the month and year of birth of their children. Noelle’s husband and Coral’s partner were present at the time of the interview; Noelle and Coral obtained the information from them. Segment 4.18 shows how this information was obtained in Coral’s case:

### Segment 4.18 Coral

61. Int: and (.) ah- can you tell me their name, >sex, month and  
62. year of birth<  
63. Coral: ·hhhh hhhh ((sigh))  
64. Int: [from eldest to youngest]  
65. Coral: [Mar- ] Martin  
66. Int: °Martin°  
67. Coral: OH WHAT YEAR WAS MARTIN BORN? ((to other person))  
68. (7.0)  
69. Coral: seventy four.  
70. Int: and (.) what m[onth  
71. Coral: [oh December.  
72. Int: °December° and does he live with you?  
73. Coral: no.  
74. Int: he lives elsewhere.  
75. Coral: (yes)  
76. Int: (and he's your partner's biological child )  
77. Coral: and another one, Christopher¿  
78. Int: °Christopher°  
79. Coral: and (.) May eighty six.( )  
80. Int: >sorry< May  
81. Coral: May eighty six.  
82. Int: May eighty six. and does he live you- with you?  
83. Coral: no.  
84. Int: lives elsewhere?  
85. Coral: yes=  
86. Int: >lives elsewhere and he's your partner's biological  
87. child.=is that all?<  
88. Coral: yes.  
89. Int: okay.

[MMPH#18:61-89]

Coral's husband's presence made obtaining this information easier. Segment 4.19 from Chrissy's interview shows the difficulty she experienced in providing information on her partner's children when her partner was not present at the time:

### Segment 4.19 Chrissy

41. Int: oh okay. so  
42. now eldest to youngest, °um this is three: chi::ldren.°  
43. Chrissy: a:: h.  
44. Int: (°do you want to tell me their [names°)  
45. Chrissy: [ages?  
46. Int: or names sorry °sex month and year of birth.°  
47. Chrissy: o:h i wouldn't have a clue.  
48. [u: m ] (.) names¿ a:h (2.0) u:m  
49. Int: [°ri:ght.°]  
50. (1.0)  
51. Chrissy: Susie¿  
52. Int: °Susie°  
53. Chrissy: who would be: , ah >i'm only guessing< about twenty four¿  
54. Int: (okay so let's say she was born ( ) a::h twenty four  
55. ( ) in ni:netee:n seventy four.)  
56. Chrissy: °i forget twenty four or twenty five¿°  
57. Int: she obviously lives elsewhere.  
58. Chrissy: they all live elsewhere.  
59. Int: (°right °)

60. and the other two, one of them's his child, and the  
 61. other one's not.  
 62. Chrissy: okay; Susie is not his child;  
 63. Int: alright. s[o-  
 64. Chrissy: [Jacob;  
 65. Int: °Jacob°  
 66. Chrissy: is (.) will be twenty three;  
 67. Int: (°so nineteen seventy five°)  
 68. Chrissy: °twenty two or something like that.° (2.0) and John is  
 69. his child;  
 70. Int: right;  
 71. Chrissy: and he's (1.5) nineteen.  
 72. Int: °nineteen.°  
 73. Chrissy: i think; or twenty. he might be twenty.  
 74. Int: (°° °°) °°)  
 75. Chrissy: mm. (°so that's it.°)  
 76. Int: and he- they all live elsewhere.  
 77. Chrissy: they all live elsewhere.  
 78. Int: and the last one is his (.) um [(biological child)]  
 79. Chrissy: [biological child. ] yes;  
 80. Int: (so )  
 81. Chrissy: mm.

[MMPH#3:39-81]

Annie again does not ask Chrissy the question as scripted on the interview schedule, asking instead only whether Chrissy wants to tell her the names of her partner's children. Chrissy asks 'ages?' and then Annie gives her the rest of the question wording asking for sex, month and year of birth as well. Chrissy does not answer immediately, saying 'o:h I wouldn't have a clue.' (line 44). She delays with 'u:m' then asks 'names?' followed by more delay with 'a:h', a two-second pause, 'u:m' and a one-second pause before giving the name of the first child. Her and her partner's situation is more complicated than the situation of the other respondents who were asked this question. Chrissy's responses to Q159 and Q160 reflect this complexity. As Segment 4.16 showed, her partner had brought up two children who were not his biological children, as well as one of his own from his previous relationship. Chrissy knew their names and their rough ages but not the months and years in which they were born. It seems that accurate responses to this question will depend on how well the respondent knows her partner's children, perhaps whether they live with her or not, and also whether the partner is available to provide information if the respondent does not know it.



#### 4.1.6 Question 164

<b>Q164: Are you currently pregnant?</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>1 (skip to Q167)</b>
	<b>No</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 4.4 shows the response outcomes for Q164. The response options, both in NLC Wave 1 and the WOC Survey, do not allow for a woman to be unsure whether she is pregnant or not.

**Table 4.4 Respondent's pregnancy status at the time of the survey, 1998**

<b>Are you currently pregnant?</b>	<b>N</b>
Yes	1
No	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

**Source:** WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

Andrea is the only respondent to answer 'yes' to this question:

#### Segment 4.20 Andrea

53. Int: and are you currently pregnant. (you just said yes)  
54. Andrea: ↑yes

[MMP#4:53–4]

Annie answered the question for Andrea.<sup>75</sup> Technically, according to survey interview protocol, Annie should have asked the question as written on the interview schedule and waited for Andrea's response. In conversation, asking again a question to which one already knows the answer is avoided.<sup>76</sup> In accordance with the principle of 'orientation to co-participant' (Sacks 1995:564), the interviewer takes into account what she already knows and designs her turn to suit the specific situation with Andrea, about which she already has information. She is displaying understanding of the talk that has already occurred (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 2000:22–4) and solving an interactional problem

<sup>75</sup> Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:76–85) notes this phenomenon in a series of Dutch standardised survey interviews, where interviewers ask a question and answer it themselves. Interviewers use it as a device to solve an interactional problem caused by the clash between the rules of survey interviewing and the principles of ordinary conversation.

occasioned by this clash of norms. Andrea had already mentioned, when asked how many children she had ever had, that she had ‘one on the way’.

In assuming this knowledge, Annie is following the rules of conversational interaction, observing Grice’s (1989:26–7) maxim of quantity<sup>77</sup> and maintaining a conversational relationship with her respondent that assumes common knowledge. Thus, she does not ask the question for Andrea to answer the question herself, as would be expected according to the conventions of interviewer behaviour (AIFS 1998:23). The fact that Annie provides the answer herself, however, does not change the response outcome and maintains her role as a co-operative conversationalist with Andrea, at the same time as indicating that she has the task of asking questions in the interview.

For Annegret, Lyn, Chrissy, Tina, Noelle, Carol, Coral, Beverly and Karen,<sup>78</sup> the response was a straightforward ‘no’, as Chrissy’s interview shows:

#### Segment 4.21 Chrissy

78. Int: okay. now. are you currently pregnant.  
79. Chrissy: no.

[MMPH#3:78–9]

On the whole, however, this was a humorous question for those who had completed their childbearing (Tonia, Joanne, Ricky, Merilyn, Melinda, Edith, Liz, Helen, Nadia, Jenny, Kerry and Debra). Merilyn’s interview demonstrates this clearly:

#### Segment 4.22 Merilyn

80. Int: °a:nd (.) are you currently pregnant.°  
81. Merilyn: no(h) [huh  
82. Int: [hah hah [hah  
83. Merilyn: [hh huh huh huh hh  
84. Int: \$is that what (you were expecting\$) ↑um-  
85. Merilyn: well- now- when you get to this a(h)ge ye(h)  
86. [(h)s hah hah]  
87. Int: [huh huh ] \$well i was thinking more your last child  
88. was born in seventy seven\$  
89. Merilyn: tha(h)t’s ri(h)(h)ght=  
90. Int: =\$it’s probably not (.) the case\$

---

<sup>76</sup> Houtkoop-Steenstra (1995:104; 2000:68) discusses these ‘known-answer’ questions or ‘exam questions’ as ‘questions to which the answerer realises the questioner already knows the answer’.

<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.4.1.

<sup>78</sup> Parts of the responses of two respondents, Nadia and Kerry, were inaudible.

91. Merilyn: no(h)  
 92. Int: um (.) so, the next question is, °contrary to that  
 93. (expectation °) how likely are you to  
 94. have a child in the future. ahhh  
 95. Merilyn: ve(h)ry unli(h)kely hee hee [hee  
 96. Int: [so definitely not?  
 97. Merilyn: ·hh i would thi(h)nk so(h)¿ hhh

[MMPH#13:80-97]

In this segment Annie distances herself from the question on the form, asking Merilyn whether the question was what she was expecting. Annie's comment in line 84 'is that what you were expecting' gets the response from Merilyn 'well- now- when you get to this a(h)ge ye(h)(h)s hah hah', apparently referring to being pregnant. It seems Annie was referring to the question being expected or not, bearing in mind that Merilyn's last child was born in 1977. Annie displays her distance from the questions in this interaction. The confusion leads to some repair being done by the participants before the question can be resolved. The extended interaction repairs the fact that a seemingly inappropriate question has been asked of a woman in her late forties. Annie combines her knowledge from this question in asking the next question (line 92). Annie also distanced herself from the question in the interview with Joanne (Segment 4.29), commenting to Joanne that 'it seems funny' to ask such a question.

Q164 was humorous for all three who had very recently given birth—Dale, Jess and Tonia. To be asked whether they were currently pregnant when they had so recently given birth was greeted with laughter. Tonia's response follows:

#### Segment 4.23 Tonia

96. Int: a:nd (.) are you currently pregnant t- hh.  
 97. Tonia no. hhh huh huh no:(h)o(h): ·hh \$i would not wanna be\$  
 98. huh huh [huh ha ·hhh ]  
 99. Int: [\$no\$ ·hh how] likely are you to have a child in  
 100. the future, very likely,

[MMPH#7:96-100]

The only respondent displaying some hesitation was Kristen:

#### Segment 4.24 Kristen

113. Int: °a:nd (.) are you currently pregnant.°  
 114. Kristen: nnno.

[MMPH#6:113-4]

Kristen's 'nnno.' shows hesitation. The lengthening of the 'nnno.' despite falling intonation, suggests that Kristen is reluctant about her negative response.<sup>79</sup> Any lengthening of sound or delay in giving a response suggests a 'dispreferred' response;<sup>80</sup> that is, it suggests that the respondent cannot give what she considers the preferred response. When I made the pre-call to Kristen to set up the WOC telephone interview, she was about to go to hospital because of cramping and pain. Later in the interview it emerges that Kristen had had a miscarriage (though it was not clear when) and that she would like to have another child if possible.

The term 'pregnancy' is an example of an indexical term (Bailey 1982:297); that is, a term the meaning of which is situationally determined (Mehan and Wood 1975:23). Bailey (1982:297–8) points out that pregnancy can be interpreted in different ways depending on the context. His comments are reproduced at length because of their relevance to Kristen's situation:

A researcher asking how many pregnancies a woman has had, for example, would consider this question to be 'clear' and would probably not anticipate that women in certain situations would find the exact meaning of 'pregnancy' ambiguous, and thus be uncertain about the correct answer to the question. If the respondents' situations do not vary (e.g., if all who become pregnant have full-term pregnancies resulting in live births), then the term 'pregnancy' is not an indexical for this sample. However, how is a woman to answer who has twins or triplets? Are twins the result of one pregnancy or two? What about the woman who is pregnant only a short time and then either has a miscarriage or an abortion? Is such a partial pregnancy to be counted as a fraction of a pregnancy, no pregnancy, or a full pregnancy? If any of these situations occur, then the term 'pregnancy' becomes an indexical (Bailey 1982:297–8).

If some of these thoughts are occurring to respondents, such as Kristen, hesitation might be expected in their answers. The possibility of different interpretations can also be seen in the answers of Dale and Kristen to Q168, *How many (more) children do you think you will have in the future?* Both Dale (Segment 4.39) and Kristen (segment not shown) mention the possibility of twins, implying that they would have one more child, but if the pregnancy resulted in twins, their response would have to be two.

---

<sup>79</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.6, delay, achieved through lengthening, is often a reluctance marker (Bilmes 1988:173).

<sup>80</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.2.6.

Q164 is a yes–no question. Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki's (1997:286) paper, 'Creating happy people by asking yes-no questions', also sheds some light on yes–no questions and answers such as this:

It appears that, in mundane talk, yes-no questions tend to be formulated in optimistic terms rather than pessimistic terms. For example, rather than asking people whether they are 'dissatisfied' or 'unhappy', one will ask whether they are 'satisfied' or 'happy' ... This means that an unmarked yes-no question, however neutral it is supposed to be, tends to project a no-problem answer (cf. Sacks, 1987, on putting in a preference for a specific answer). A positive answer ('yes') to such a question agrees with the tacitly framed candidate no-problem answer and is therefore preferred (cf. Pomerantz, 1984).

This may explain the answers given to Q164, *Are you currently pregnant?* by some respondents. The structure of the question predicts a 'yes' response, a built-in bias for agreement; so that in order to give a 'no' response a respondent must often do more interactional work.<sup>81</sup>

When the tapes and transcripts of the interviews are examined, it is not always possible to separate the WOC Survey questions and treat them as separate items with no overlap with each other, as would generally be expected by designers of surveys (Groves 1989:477–82, 498). This is particularly true of Q164, Q165 and Q166, where elements of each question were sometimes answered in the process of answering a previous question. Thus, some segments illustrating the interaction for these questions include more than one question from the interview schedule. Interviewers and respondents are shown to make connections between questions, in that they do not ask or answer again a question to which they have already been given the answer, unless they make clear that they are violating a conversational principle in doing so. This is demonstrated in Segments 4.20, 4.26, 4.27 and 4.33.

---

<sup>81</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Sacks (1987).

#### 4.1.7 Question 165

**Q165: How likely are you to have a child in the future, are you VERY LIKELY, LIKELY, NOT SURE, UNLIKELY, MOST UNLIKELY OR DEFINITELY NOT?**

Very likely	1 (skip to Q167)
Likely	2 (skip to Q167)
Not sure	3 (skip to Q167)
Unlikely	4
Most unlikely	5
Definitely not	6

Table 4.5 shows the responses for this question.

**Table 4.5 Respondent's likelihood of having a child in the future, 1998**

How likely are you to have a child in the future?	N
Very likely	2
Likely	0
Not sure	2
Unlikely	2
Most unlikely	1
Definitely not	19
Question not to be asked	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

**Source:** WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

The interviewer is expected to deliver this question and its response options in a single stretch of talk. Not doing so has consequences for standardisation (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:68). In practice, Annie asked this question in a variety of ways that differed from the scripted version. Not only does the emphasis on words and phrases differ, but the question is also asked in many different ways, with or without any or all of the response options. Only with two of the 26 respondents for whom this question was relevant, Tina and Jenny, did Annie ask Q165 exactly as it was scripted on the interview schedule.

With Carol, for example, Annie asked the question, paused, and only delivered the response options once Carol had responded with 'mmm':

### Segment 4.25 Carol

65. Int: how likely are you, to have a child in the future.  
 66. (1.3)  
 67. Carol: mmm  
 68. Int: very likely, likely, not sure, unlikely, most unlikely,  
 69. or definitely not.  
 70. Carol: ·hh ↑well, i wouldn't say, definitely not.=but  
 71. ↓unlikely.  
 72. Int: unlikely. (°okay°) (2.3) and (.) why is it unlikely that  
 73. you will have a child.

[MMPH#15:65–73]

This way of delivering a question without its response options is noted in the literature on survey interviews as being quite common, despite the instructions to interviewers to deliver the question and response options in one stretch of talk (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:99). The pause after Annie's question (line 66) is Carol's pause, despite the fact that Annie has not asked the question as scripted on the interview schedule. By not giving the response options in the question as scripted, Annie does not give Carol a frame of reference for her answer. Carol's response 'mmm' might in fact be 'ummm', indicating that she is thinking, rather than a continuer that allows Annie to keep talking.<sup>82</sup> Annie does keep talking and delivers the response options as expected in the script. Carol hesitates in her response, eventually settling on '↓unlikely.'

In Noelle's interview Annie delivers some of the options only, and after Noelle has answered the question in terms of two of the possible options:

### Segment 4.26 Noelle

87. Int: and (.) ↑how likely are you to have a child in the  
 88. future.  
 89. Noelle: <very unlikely if not impossible.>  
 90. Int: h(h)oka(h)y, ·hhh so, if we say, unlikely, most  
 91. unlikely, or definitely not, which one would you  
 92. s[ay.  
 93. Noelle: [o:h.=well, i would probably say, definitely no(h)t.  
 94. huh [·hh  
 95. Int: [definitely no[t.  
 96. Noelle: [getting  
 97. a bit old now, (1.3) (°getting a bit old°)

[MMPH#14:87–97]

Not asking the response options in one stretch means that further interaction must occur before Annie can fill in the form. As a first answer Annie obtains a broad answer,

‘<very unlikely if not impossible>’ that does not fit an allowable response option on the interview schedule. She then has to get Noelle to refine it to fit the options on the form. Here, Noelle pre-empts the response to Q166, by giving the reason why she is definitely not likely to have a child in the future—‘getting a bit old now’—before the question is asked.

Despite the ‘skip’ instruction, Q165 was asked accidentally of Andrea, who was pregnant at the time of the interview:

#### Segment 4.27 Andrea

55. Int: a:nd how likely are you: ( question) to have  
 56. another child in the future because you're likely to  
 57. have a child aren't you ( )  
 58. Andrea: hmm

[MMPH#4:55–8]

It seems that Annie realised her mistake quickly, answering the question herself—‘because you’re likely to have a child aren’t you’—followed by some inaudible comments. She did not complete the response options on the form.

For many respondents, Q164 and Q165 were closely linked, especially for women who had completed childbearing. Being asked whether they were likely to have a child in the future was amusing, as was being asked whether they were currently pregnant. Laughter was a strong feature of these interactions, as Melinda’s interview shows:

#### Segment 4.28 Melinda

58. Int: ↑um (.) and are you currently pregnant.  
 59. Melinda: ↑no. ((surprise)) (0.6) uh [huh  
 60. Int: [uh [huh  
 61. Melinda: [huh huh [huh huh ·hhh  
 62. Int: [now, (.) how  
 63. likely are you, to have a  
 64. [chil- another child in the f]uture.  
 65. Melinda: [huh huh huh huh huh ·hhh ]  
 66. Melinda: no. not likely, [uh huh huh huh  
 67. Int: [°not likely.° so, was it unlikely,  
 68. most unlikely or definitely not.  
 69. Melinda: definitely not. [a(h)h  
 70. Int: [(°right°)

[MMPH#16:58-70]

---

<sup>82</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.2.



This segment is an example of the way in which Q164 and Q165 were linked. Laughter is a feature of both the interviewer's and the respondent's turns once Melinda gives a surprised 'no' response—indicated by higher pitch and falling intonation—to being asked whether she is currently pregnant. Annie interrupts Melinda's laughter to ask the next question about how likely Melinda is to have a child in the future, again not providing the response options together with the question. Melinda interrupts with laughter before giving her negative response. Annie requires further narrowing of the options before she can fill in the form, but limits to three the options provided in her formulation candidate answer. She finally gets the answer 'definitely not,' followed by a laughter pulse.

In Joanne's interview, Annie also does not deliver the response options, but for a different reason:

#### Segment 4.29 Joanne

104. Int: (°right°) a:nd (.) are you currently ↑pregnant.  
 105. Joanne: no:,  
 106. Int: (° °) and how likely are you to have a  
 107. child [in the future?]  
 108. Joanne: [not likely, ]  
 109. Int: [not likely? ] [or definitely not ]  
 110. Joanne: [at all heh heh] [only grandchi(h)ld]  
 111. Int: oka(h)y ·hh so [w-  
 112. Joanne: [definitely not.  
 113. (1.3)  
 114. Int: °right. >it seems funny ( ) when  
 115. [you've just found out how many kids they've got, to ask]=  
 116. Joanne: [hh (h) heh heh heh ·hh ]  
 117. Int: =that sort of [illogical-°<  
 118. Joanne: [yeah i've got two  
 119. grandchildren now so n[o. heh heh heh heh heh ·hhh  
 118 Int: [↑two ↑grandchildren  
 119 Int: ·hh ↑um now the next question is why is it unlikely that  
 120 you'll want to have- you will- you will have another child in  
 121 the future (°age is it?°)  
 122 Joanne: yea::h that'll do hah hah hah hah ·hhh

[MMPH#10:104–122]

When Annie has said 'and how likely are you to have a child', Joanne has heard enough to give her response. She comes in before Annie can finish the question and deliver the response options. Joanne's 'not likely,' (line 107) occasions the response 'not likely? or definitely not.' 'Not likely' is not one of the options provided on the interview schedule, but at the same time as Annie queries 'not likely,' Joanne adds 'at all heh heh only grandchi(h)ld'. When Annie begins to formulate her understanding of Joanne's answer,

Joanne responds emphatically, ‘definitely not.’ Then Annie has an answer that fits the response options on the interview schedule.

Annie’s comment after obtaining a response that fits the response options to the question (lines 114–5) is another comment that distances her from the writer of the question and aligns her with the respondent. Annie also distances herself from the respondent by saying ‘when you’ve just found out how many kids they’ve got’, using ‘they’ to refer to respondents like Joanne. The comment, not all of it audible on tape, is followed by more laughter and agreement ‘yeah’ from Joanne. The laughter and volunteering of information about grandchildren, although not relevant to the question asked, does not seem out of place when considered in the context of the interview as also achieving conversational ends. After Q155, Annie and Joanne had had an extended conversational exchange of experiences, an aside to asking questions and giving answers, occasioned by Annie’s comment that she too came from a family of four girls, like Joanne’s daughters.

Segment 4.29 above is another example of how the asking of questions is linked. After their interaction on Q164 and Q165, where it emerges that Joanne has four grown-up children and no intention of having any more, Annie pre-empts Joanne’s answer to the following Q166, “age is it? ” with no gap after the question and before Joanne has a chance to answer (lines 120, 121). Again, Annie could be expected to know this information as a result of Joanne’s answer to Q164 and because of the mention of a grandchild in the interaction over this question.

In Karen’s case Annie asks the question quite differently from the way in which it is scripted. That is, she asks it as a yes–no question rather than a ‘how’ question:

#### Segment 4.30 Karen

66. Int: and (.) are you likely to have a child in the future.  
 67. Karen: no.  
 68. Int: ·hh a::h most unlikely or definitely not.  
 69. Karen: definitely not.  
 70. Int: (°definitely not.°) [·hh  
 71. Karen: [we've had procedures undertaken.  
 72. [hah hah hah hah hah °hah hah° ] [·hhh ]  
 73. Int: [i see=that's actually the next question.] [<<ha::d]  
 74. procedures  
 75. Karen: ah hah [°hah° ·hh  
 76. Int: [to:: sto::p>>  
 77. Karen: yep

78. Int: °°to stop pregnancy ( )°°  
[MMPH#19:66–78]

When Annie receives the response ‘no’ (line 67), she draws breath and gives two of the six response options. Karen confirms ‘definitely not.’ Here, too, Karen gives the response to Q166 before it is asked, accompanied by much laughter. Annie does not then ask Q166 and remains content with one reason, even though the scripted question instructs the interviewer to prompt for two.

Another variation on the question occurs in Sonya’s and Tonia’s interviews. The following excerpt shows part of Tonia’s interview:

#### Segment 4.31 Tonia

99. Int: \$no\$ ·hh how likely are you to have a child in the  
100. future, very likely,  
101. (0.6)  
102. Tonia not likely.  
103. Int: so not- mo-=unlikely most unlikely definitely not.  
104. Tonia definitely not.  
105. Int: (°okay°)

[MMPH#5:99–105]

After asking the question, Annie delivers only the first of the response options—*very likely*—as a candidate answer and waits. Tonia’s ‘not likely’ is not an option on the form. Again, this illustrates what can happen when a respondent does not have a frame of reference for her answer; her answer is more likely not to fit the pre-determined options. So, after some false starts, showing repair work, Annie then asks three of the remaining five options at the negative end of the spectrum.

In Sonya’s case (not shown here), only two further options are delivered. In her interview with Jess Annie gives two options before being interrupted by Jess, who has heard enough to give a response. Sometimes Annie does not deliver the options because the respondent interrupts, like Joanne (Segment 4.29) and Edith (not shown), or provides an answer that makes providing the options redundant (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:68). In the interview with Liz (Segment 4.33), for example, Annie assumes the answer ‘definitely not’ from what Liz said previously, that she certainly hoped she was not pregnant at 52 years of age. Liz confirmed Annie’s interpretation by responding to Annie’s question, ‘how likely are you to have a child in the future, and you’ve said

definitely not’, with the words ‘forget it’. Annie makes a similar interpretation with Edith, Coral, Ricky, Chrissy, Nadia, Kerry, Lindy, Debra and Helen; that is, she formulates the answer they gave in terms of the response option *definitely not*.

The discussion on Q165 in this section has focused on the way the interviewer asked the question rather than the nature of the responses to it. The respondents’ laughter, apparent in many of the interviews, seems often to be related to whether the question is appropriate for the respondent. As mentioned in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4.1), the ‘audience design’ of survey questions may cause problems for individual respondents who are assuming recipient design from a co-operating interviewer (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995). This question and the nature of the answers and responses to it are examined in more detail in Chapter 5, together with the responses to the following question, Q166.

#### 4.1.8 Question 166

<b>Q166: Why is it unlikely that you will have a child?</b>	
<b>Prompt for two reasons</b>	<b>(Any other reason?)</b>
I'm too old	01
Health reasons	02
I don't have a partner	03
My career would be affected	04
My partner's career would be affected	05
My lifestyle would be affected	06
Children cost too much	07
I don't like children	08
My partner does not like children	09
My partner already has children from a previous relationship	10
No major reason, just think it's unlikely	11
Other (specify)	12
If Q165=(4–6) finish here.	

This question is a field-coded question, where the interviewer asks the question and has response options in front of her but does not inform the respondent of the response options (de Vaus 1995:86; Fowler and Mangione 1990:88; Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:4–5, 107–27; Smit 1995; Sudman and Bradburn 1982:294).<sup>83</sup> The interviewer codes the answer given by the respondent according to the response options on the interview schedule. Table 4.6 shows the outcomes for this question.

<sup>83</sup> Field-coded questions are discussed at length in the discussion of Q167 in Chapter 6.

**Table 4.6      Respondent's reasons for being unlikely to have a child in the future, 1998**

Reason	Number of respondents
01 Too old	13
02 Health reasons	-
03 No partner	2
04 Career would be affected	-
05 Partner's career would be affected	-
06 Lifestyle would be affected	2
07 Children cost too much	-
08 Don't like children	-
09 Partner doesn't like children	-
10 Partner already has children	-
11 No major reason	-
12 Other	15
Question not asked	5

**Note:** Respondents were to be prompted for two reasons.

**Source:** WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

Q166 was asked of 22 respondents: those who said that they were unlikely, most unlikely or definitely not likely to have a child in the future. Of these responses, 'other' constituted the largest category. Table 4.7 shows these 'other' responses.

**Table 4.7      WOC Survey Q166 'other' responses**

Reason <sup>1</sup>	Respondent
'choose not to'	Chrissy
'partner has had a vasectomy'	Tonia
'husband had vasectomy'	Lindy, Debra
'had means to stop pregnancy'	Sonya
'don't want any more kids—2's plenty—too expensive'	Noelle
'part time not applicable for job'	Carol
'reached 40 personal decision not to'	Melinda
'feels physically too old, very satisfied c. family as it is, had older parents and felt like <del>didn't</del> wanted to have kids when younger'	Lyn
'tubes are tied'	Edith
'choice of me and my partner'	Coral
'had procedures to stop pregnancy'	Karen
'had hysterectomy'	Nadia
'tubal ligation'	Helen
'have as many children as I want, financial and physical demands'	Jenny

**Note:** 1 Reasons cited as written.

**Source:** WOC Interview Schedule 1998

Like Q164 and Q165, Q165 and Q166 are closely linked, with many respondents giving their response to Q166 together with their response to Q165, as in the case of Karen (Segment 4.30). Because of the close links between the questions, it is useful to examine a segment covering all three questions, rather than each question in isolation. Helen's interview (Segment 4.32) shows the link between the three questions:

#### Segment 4.32 Helen

114. Int: are you currently pregnant.  
 115. Helen: hhhe(h)no(h) [h(h) ] i(h)I BLOO(H)DY OPE NO[(H)T  
 116. Int: [heh heh] [hh heh]  
 117. Int: heh [.hh  
 118. Helen: [he heh heh heh=  
 119. Int: =we've gotta ask all these  
 120. question[s  
 121. Helen: [he ha ha [ha  
 122. Int: [h(h)hh[huh  
 123. Helen: [he heh [heh]  
 124. Int: [.hh] so the next  
 125. question you might ( ) a bit ( )  
 126. ).=↑how likely are you to have a child in  
 127. the future.  
 128. Helen: never  
 129. Int: so definitely not.  
 130. Helen: >definitely not.<  
 131. Int: °okay°=  
 132. Helen: =nope.  
 133. (1.6)  
 134. Int: now the next question is why aren't you likely to (°have  
 135. another child°=)  
 136. Helen: =i've had me tubes cut and tie(h)d. hh heh [heh  
 137. Int: [hh heh heh  
 138. ri(h)ght hh  
 139. Helen: plus going through menopause,  
 140. Int: °right.° (1.0) you're too old. (to have another child  
 141. [ )  
 142. Helen: [well- yes. i am too old.  
 143. Int: °okay then.° and i'm also saying that you've had a tubal  
 144. ligation  
 145. [just] (so [ )  
 146. Helen: [yes ] [yeah  
 147. Int: (° okay.°)

[MMPH#22:114–47]

Again, Annie asks Q165 in a way that shows prior knowledge of Helen's situation. Annie comments, 'we've gotta ask all these questions' after Helen's loud and definite answer. In saying this, she accounts for asking a question that is inappropriate for Helen who has mentioned already that she is minding her grandchildren. Annie prefaces the next question with a partly inaudible formulation, 'so the next question you might ( ) a bit ( )' (lines 124–5), that again acknowledges the information she knows about Helen and distances her from the writer of the question (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:46–

52). This formulation links the two questions rather than keeping them as separate entities.

The linking of questions is evident again in Liz's interview:

#### Segment 4.33 Liz

51. Int: and (.) are you currently pregnant.  
52. (1.6)  
53. Liz: at fifty two i certainly hope not.  
54. Int: ah(h)[hh o::h oka::y ] ·hh and so the next one=  
55. Liz: [ah hah hah hah hah hah]  
56. Int: =is, how likely are you to have a child in the  
57. [future, and you've said] definitely not=  
58. Liz: [·hhh forget it ]  
59. Int: =[·hh and the] next question is why::?=and we=  
60. Liz: [hng de(h)finitely ]  
61. Int: =can say age is a factor t! [·hhh um-  
62. Liz: [age is a very good  
63. fact[or.  
64. Int: [yihhh ·hh ↑um (.) now what determined the timing  
65. of your first child.

[MMPH#20:51-65]

Liz has already provided the answer to Q166 in the course of responding to Q165. Annie abbreviates her asking of Q166 and avoids asking Liz to repeat her answer by providing the answer herself, using 'and we can say age is a factor t!'

Sometimes Annie asks the question even when she already has the answer, as in Noelle's case:

#### Segment 4.34 Noelle

96. Noelle: getting a bit old now, (1.3) (°getting a bit old°)  
97. Int: well that's my next question. um- what- why is it  
98. unlikely that you will have another [child.  
99. Noelle: [oh well, yes, just  
100. because um- (.) ↓yes. i'm getting (.) too ↑old. huh ·h  
101. and, (.) i don't want any more.

[MMPH#14:97-101]

Noelle has also answered Q166 before Annie asks the question. Here, although Annie has the answer, she asks the question again with a preface 'well that's my next question.'<sup>84</sup> This demonstrates to Noelle that she knows that Noelle has already given her this information but that she will still violate the principle of quantity. This

---

<sup>84</sup> The function of 'well' is discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.1.

acknowledges Noelle's previous contribution and gives Noelle a chance to answer the question more fully, providing a second reason to the reason originally provided. The script for the question asks Annie to prompt until she has two reasons, although she does not always do so. Twelve of the 21 respondents who were asked this question gave only one reason; when one reason only was given, it was usually age or that the respondent had had a tubal ligation or her partner/husband had had a vasectomy, and maybe Annie saw no reason to prompt for a second reason in this case.

Annie asks Marilyn part of the question only:

#### Segment 4.35 Marilyn

98. Int: °o(h)ka(h)y.° and the next question is um- why is it  
99. unlikely  
100. Marilyn: well.=you'd put down age wouldn't you?  
101. Int: (°°too old°°)  
102. Marilyn: yeah

[MMPH#13:98–102]

Here again, the question is delivered in a way that connects it with the previous question, 'it' being used to refer to the likelihood of having a child in the future, the concept in Q165. Marilyn's answer, 'well.=you'd put down age wouldn't you?' indicates awareness of the interviewer's task of filling in responses on the interview schedule.

Sometimes, Annie varies the wording of the scripted question. She often says 'another child' rather than 'a child' as in the scripted question. When asking Q166 of Joanne, Annie stumbles over the wording of the question, correcting 'that you'll want to have' to 'you will have another child in the future', closer to the words of the scripted question but adding 'in the future', wording used for Q165 (Segment 4.26). 'In the future' is also added in several of the interviews. Sometimes different words in the question are stressed: sometimes 'why?' and sometimes 'unlikely'. Fowler and Mangione (1990:35) observe that, although most changes in wording may appear to be minor, the 'critical issue from the point of view of measurement is whether or not the question wording changes that occur make any difference to the quality of measurement.'

Q165 and 166 raise many important issues about interaction over questions of pregnancy and the likelihood of a future birth. The way in which the interaction proceeds demonstrates clearly the way in which recipient design operates in surveys.



Asking women who are approaching or have reached menopause, who have had several children—or grandchildren—already, is shown by the participants in the interviews to be inappropriate. Interviewers and respondents are caught between two sets of principles, the principles of ordinary conversation and the rules of surveys. They solve this problem through interaction while negotiating responses. These interactional issues are the concern of Chapter 6.

4.1.9     *Question 167*

This question asks about the factors that determined the respondent’s first birth. If the respondent was pregnant, the question asked about the factors determining that pregnancy. If the respondent had not given birth to a child, the question asked a hypothetical question about the factors that would determine when or if she might have a child.

<b>Q167:(If Q154=0 and Q164=not 1):</b>	<b>What will determine when or if you have your first child?</b>
(If Q154=0 and Q164=1):	<b>What determined the timing of this pregnancy?</b>
(If Q154=not 0):	<b>What determined the timing of your first child?</b>
<b>Prompt for two reasons (Any other reasons?)</b>	
I have to get a partner first	01
Convincing my partner that it’s a good idea	02
It will happen when it happens	03
Unplanned, it just happened	04
Failure of contraception/family planning method	05
Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage	06
Being established in my career	07
My partner being established in their career	08
Having enough money to buy a house	09
Feeling able to cope with the demands of a child	10
My relationship with my partner being well-established	11
After having time to enjoy myself before settling down	12
When I/we feel/felt right about it	13
Feeling financially secure	14
Other (specify)	15

Table 4.8 shows the outcomes for this question.

**Table 4.8** Factors determining respondent's timing of first birth, future first birth, or this pregnancy, 1998

Determining factor	Number of respondents <sup>a</sup>
01 Have to get a partner first	1
02 Convincing partner	1
03 Will happen when it happens	0
04 Unplanned, just happened	11 <sup>b</sup>
05 Failure of contraception, FP method	5
06 Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage	3
07 Being established in career	2
08 Partner being established in career	2
09 Having enough money to buy a house	1
10 Feeling able to cope with the demands of a child	3
11 Relationship with partner being well established	5
12 After having time to enjoy herself before settling down	0
13 When felt right about it	12
14 Feeling financially secure	5
15 Other <sup>c</sup>	8

**Notes:** **a** N is the number of responses not the number of respondents. Any number of factors could be listed for this question. The maximum number recorded for any was five. Responses given here are from 25 respondents. Tina was asked the question in error. **b** Five women gave the combination 04 and 05. **c** In all cases but one 'other' was not marked as a response but a note was written directly under the response option 'other'.

**Source:** WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

Q167 has three variants. The first question was asked of one respondent, Tina; the second was asked of one respondent (Andrea); and the third of 23 respondents. Two respondents, Beverly and Chrissy were not asked the question at all; neither respondent had ever had children, neither was currently pregnant, and both said they were unlikely to have children in the future. Having three variants sometimes caused difficulties for Annie in deciding which question to ask which respondent. In the NLC Wave 1 interviews this would not have been a problem, as the CATI system would have managed this decision for the interviewer. In asking the question of Dale, for example, Annie starts to ask the wrong question, realises her mistake, and asks another question:

**Segment 4.36 Dale**

77. Int: °oka:y° so ↑what will determine when or if you have um  
78. t! (0.6) °a child° >oh hold on no< [what determined the=  
79. Dale: [no  
80. Int: =timing of your first child=°that's the first question°

[MMPH#8:77-80]

Tina should not have been asked this question at all, as she answered ‘unlikely’ to Q164, had no children and was not currently pregnant; Annie asked it in error. This resulted in additional information that shed more light on Tina’s likelihood of having a child. Here is the segment from her interview that shows the interaction around this question:

#### Segment 4.37 Tina

42. Int: what will determine if um (not sure it's )  
 43. Tina: hh hhh  
 44. Int: ahhh (h)a um sorry  
 45. Tina: ha ha i'm curious now ha ha  
 46. Int: >OH NO it just says what will determine if and when you  
 47. have your first chi::ld<  
 48. Tina: °oh right°  
 49. (1.3)  
 50. Int: [hhh ] so(h)rry hh i'm supposed to skip some and not=  
 51. Tina: [ah hh]  
 52. Int: =skip some.  
 53. Tina: oh [right  
 54. Int: [so yeah what would determine- what will determine  
 55. °if you had your first child.°  
 56. Tina: u↑m (.)i guess if i met someone i really like, and um  
 57. ( ) yeah i was (.) still (.) less than  
 58. forty¿ ah [(h)a ha  
 59. Int: [right i'll just turn the page ((long pause  
 60. where Annie is talking quietly to herself))

[MMPH#12:42–60]

Annie realised her mistake almost immediately (lines 42–4). She also acknowledged this by writing ‘oops accidentally asked this’ on the questionnaire next to the question. Tina, however, is curious about the question and Annie tells her what it was. Even though Tina's ‘oh right’ shows that she has received this information, Annie apologises then goes ahead and asks the question anyway. She starts off asking a different variant again from the three scripted variants: ‘What would determine-.’ This wording was more appropriate for Tina, who had never had a child, as it contained the conditional ‘would’, appropriate where someone has said that they will not do something.<sup>85</sup> As a result, however, more information becomes available about Tina’s reasons for being unlikely to have a child. This confirms the information obtained by Q166.

In all cases except Tina’s this question was asked more-or-less as scripted on the form. Minor differences in delivery occurred with stress on different words in different interviews in varying combinations: what, determined, timing, first or child. In a couple

of cases, Annie made a false start in delivering the question or had to repeat the question after a request from the respondent. Edith's interview is interesting here:

#### Segment 4.38 Edith

124. Int: °okay.° ↑now ↑what detim- what determined (.) the timing  
125. of your first child.  
126. Edith: a::h (1.3) what determined?  
127. Int: mm. what- was it- you know- you- you were just newly  
128. married and wanted to have a child as soon as possible  
129. ( )

[MMPH#17:124-9]

Here, Edith queries 'what determined?' (line 126) and Annie abandons the scripted question in favour of a yes-no question based on one of the response options. Two other respondents, Kristen and Noelle, asked for repetition of the question. It may be that the concept of determining timing caused them some difficulty; in addition, the wording is rather more formal than the language likely to be used by most women in daily conversation.<sup>86</sup> Annie's response to Edith is in terms of one of the possible determinants, rather than a rephrasing of the question. According to strict interpretation of interviewing principles, Annie should not have given any explanation or clarification here (AIFS 1998:23; Fowler and Mangione 1990; Frey and Oishi 1995; Kahn and Cannell 1964; Keats 2000:63).

Chapter 6 examines in more detail the answers and responses to these questions, as this question involved considerably longer interaction and much more writing on the interview schedule compared with earlier questions.

---

<sup>85</sup> Like many of the examples given in this chapter, this re-wording demonstrates the application of the notion of recipient design, outlined in Chapter 3 Section 3.4.1.

<sup>86</sup> It seems to me that in conversation women would be more likely to ask something like: 'Why did you have your child when you did?' or 'What made you have children?' rather than using a more 'academic' term such as 'determine'. Gorden (1969:201) provides an example of the way a change in vocabulary was effective in asking a group of mothers about toilet-training their children.

4.1.10 Question 168

Q168:	(If Q154=0 and Q164=not 1):	How many children do you think you will have in the future?
	(Else):	How many more children do you think you will have in the future?
	(If Q164=1):	How many more children do you think you will have in the future in addition to the current pregnancy)?
<div>□□</div>		

This question was asked of five respondents: Angela, Dale, Kristen, Jess and Annegret—those respondents who had not ruled out the possibility of having another child in Q165. In all cases the outcome in the boxes on the interview schedule was ‘01’ (see Q168 above). Additional information was written on the interview schedule by the interviewer in three of the five cases: ‘maybe’ for Andrea, ‘if possible’ for Kristen and ‘two in total’ for Dale. Table 4.9 shows the outcomes for this question on the interview schedule.

Table 4.9 Number of children respondent thinks she will have in the future

Number of children	Number of respondents
One	5
More than one	0
Question not asked	22

Source: WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

This question seemed, on paper, to be unproblematic; that is, it did not appear to be ambiguous and the interviewer’s asking of it seemed to be straightforward. However, in practice, the asking of this question, like Q167, was somewhat confusing for Annie because there were three alternatives. Without the CATI system to decide which respondent should be asked which question based on earlier responses, it was easy to ask the wrong question. Annie mistakenly asked Dale, Kristen and Annegret the first version of the question, designed for respondents who had not previously had children and who were not currently pregnant. The following segment from Annie’s interview with Dale shows that asking a slightly different version of the question results in a small problem:

Segment 4.39 Dale

112.       Int:           ↑u:m (.) a:nd ↑how many children do you think you will

**[MMPH#8:112-23]**

With Jess, Annie at first used wording that did not match any of the three scripted alternatives:

[MMPH#9:80-2]

141

#### Segment 4.41 Andrea

69. Int: a::nd hh a::h how many children do you think you'll have  
70. in the future.  
71. (1.0)  
72. Andrea: j- sorry. >sorry again<  
73. Int: >sorry-< how many chil[dren do you-  
74. Andrea: [HEY MCGI::LL U-((calling out to  
75. someone)) (2.0)(RIGHTO. THANKS.)  
76. Int: (righto) sorry.  
77. Andrea: >sorry<  
78. Int: 's alright. so how many more children do you think  
79. you'll have in the future.  
80. Andrea: o::h [i'm not really su::re]  
81. Int: [in addition to the] current pregnancy. [so-  
82. Andrea: [ma:ybe  
83. one ( ) maybe (1.0) [huh huh  
84. Int: [maybe. so we can put w-·hh huh huh  
85. oka(h)y. i'll put it there. (2.0) °·hh oka:y. °

[MMP#4:69-85]

Again, this problem of asking the wrong question would probably not have occurred had the CATI system been in use for the WOC Survey. Andrea interrupts Annie to call out to someone, apologising twice after interruptions during the interaction over this question. What is interesting is that Annie also apologises twice. As noted in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4.2), interviewers frequently apologise, saying 'sorry' in order to keep the interview running smoothly (Bean and Johnstone 1994). After these interruptions Annie asks the question again, this time using the correct scripted variant, but with different emphasis—on 'have' rather than 'children' and 'future'. Annie also adds an explanation of 'more', saying 'in addition to the current pregnancy.' and thus avoiding any ambiguity.

Annie records Andrea's emphasised and drawn-out 'ma:ybe one' as '01' in the box, and writes '(maybe)' on the interview schedule next to the boxes. The response options here do not allow for tentative responses, forcing the interviewer to make an arbitrary decision. Annie's interpretation is that it is more likely that Andrea will have another child than not, but the grounds for this interpretation are not clear from the interaction in this interview.

4.1.11 Question 193 and 194

<b>Q193:</b>	I'm going to read you some statements about children and I'd like you to tell me whether you <b>STRONGLY AGREE</b> , <b>AGREE</b> , <b>DISAGREE</b> or <b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b> with each one:	
<b>Q194:</b>	Do you <b>STRONGLY AGREE</b> , <b>AGREE</b> , <b>DISAGREE</b> OR <b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b> ?	
1. A life without children is not fully complete		12345
2. Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother		12345
3. Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the father		12345
4. Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy		12345
5. It is better not to have children because they are such a burden		12345
6. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work		12345
7. Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother		12345

The total picture of response options for this question is shown in the format provided on the interviewer's form, shown as Table 4.10, even though the interviewer did not follow this format in recording the responses.<sup>87</sup>

Table 4.10 Responses to Q194

State- ment No.	Strongly agree	Agree	Mixed feelings	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know/ Refused	N
1.	6	10	1	7	3		27
2.	4	5		17	1		27
3.		3		18	5	1	27
4.	11	11	1	3		1	27
5.				9	18		27
6.	12	12	1	1	1		27
7.	9	4		8	6		27

Source: WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

Although these two questions have separate numbers, they are delivered according to the standard practice of delivering them as one question. The responses for these questions were set out as above on the form. However, the interviewer found it more convenient to circle the corresponding number after the statement contained in the question on the form than to fill in a separate box below. This issue would not have arisen if the CATI



system had been used for the WOC interviews, but it may in fact be more difficult for the interviewer to transfer the response to the correct box if it is removed from the statement to which it refers. Table 4.11 shows the response outcomes for this question.

This set of statements in Q193 and Q194 undoubtedly caused the most trouble with the largest number of respondents in the interactions between respondent and interviewer in the WOC interviews.<sup>88</sup> They also resulted in considerably longer interviews in some cases. The nature of the trouble and how it was resolved are the subject of Chapter 7. Here, for the purpose of focusing on the questions rather than the content of the responses, the discussion is restricted as far as possible to the way the question as a whole and each statement individually were asked of the respondents. At times, however, because of the interactive nature of asking and answering questions, this distinction is difficult to maintain.

Annegret's remark on hearing the questions and statements is revealing:

#### Segment 4.42 Annegret

88. Int: t! a:nd (.) i'm going to read through some statements  
 89. about children now, and i'd like you to tell me  
 90. whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or  
 91. strongly disagree, with each statement, ·hhhh and the  
 92. first one is, a life without children is not fully  
 93. complete. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or  
 94. [strongly disa-  
 95. Annegret: [t! o(h) \$i remember these questions from last time\$  
 96. ·hhh [u::hmmm ha ha::: =  
 97. Int: [ >yeah, well you do:, (they're funny question-=  
 98. Annegret: = ]  
 99. Int: = )<]  
 100. Annegret: =\$they were silly last time too\$ [.hhh ]=  
 101. Int: [o(h) heh heh]  
 102. Annegret: =um heh u:m (1.0)·hhh  
 103. (0.3)  
 104. Int: >i'll read it out again.<=  
 105. Annegret: =>yeah no no i remember it< [um ·hhh  
 106. Int: [ >oh you remember it<  
 107. Annegret: hhhhhh (2.0) it's a really hard one to answer

[MMPH#1:88-107]

<sup>87</sup> A more detailed table of responses for both NLC Wave 1 and the WOC Survey is given in Table 7.1 in Chapter 7.

<sup>88</sup> Similar questions in the second wave of the full NLC survey in June–July 2000 also caused respondents difficulty. Since there were many more interviewers involved, the difficulty was clearly a result of the nature of the questions and not a result of how one interviewer asked these questions. It is, however, the case that using only one interviewer for the WOC Survey increases interviewer variance (Kahn and Cannell 1957:189).

Annie's response to Annegret's remembering the questions is to note 'yeah, well.....' Her use of 'you' is ambiguous here; it could be 'you' meaning 'Annegret' or the impersonal 'you' meaning 'one', which could include Annie herself (Sacks 1995:Vol.2, p.374). It is, therefore, potentially a way of maintaining a relationship with Annegret that will allow Annie to complete the survey and a way of distancing herself from the writer of the question (Brown and Levinson 1987:197-8). Annie's next remark: 'they're funny question-' is clearly a remark that distances her from the writer of the questions, followed by some laughter. Annegret does not laugh as much in response, with only one 'heh' to Annie's two.

The interview with Tina was the first of Annie's interviews with the WOC respondents. Annie mentions this when introducing Q193 and Q194. Although there were some initial difficulties for Annie in asking the question, this interview went smoothly:

#### Segment 4.43 Tina

65. Int: now i'm going to read through some statements about  
 66. children >sorry this is my first time (°  
 67. [ ] get used to <°) [so]=  
 68. Tina: [oh that's alright ] [hh]  
 69. Int: =i'm going to read through some statements about  
 70. children and i'd like you to tell me whether you  
 71. strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree,  
 72. with each one. a:nd the first one is, a life without  
 73. children is not fully complete. do you strongly agree,  
 74. agree, disagree or strongly disagree with that.  
 75. Tina: disagree.  
 76. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of the  
 77. mother. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or  
 78. strongly disagree (°with that°)  
 79. Tina: agree.  
 80. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of the  
 81. father. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or  
 82. strongly disagree  
 83. Tina: u:m (.) agree.  
 84. Int: watching children grow up is life's greatest joy. do you  
 85. strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree  
 86. Tina: ↑oh (3.6) strongly agree.  
 87. Int: °strongly agree.° it is better not to have children  
 88. because they are such a burden. °do you strongly agree,  
 89. agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.°  
 90. Tina: ↑u::m disagree.  
 91. Int: a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a  
 92. relationship with her children as a mother who does not  
 93. work. °do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or  
 94. strongly disagree.°  
 95. Tina: strongly agree.  
 96. Int: ( ) whatever career- sorry  
 97. whatever career a woman may have, her most important  
 98. role in life is that of becoming a mother. (°do you  
 99. strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.°)  
 100. Tina: (um) strongly disagree.  
 101. Int: °strongly disagree.° OKAY.

[MMPH#12:65-101]

First, Annie starts to read the question preface (Q193)(line 65), and then apologises for this being her first time, saying she is still getting used to the survey. She repeats the preface, and then goes straight on to read the first statement and to read out all the response options. Delivering the question preface gives her the go-ahead to go straight to the first question without acknowledgment from the respondent.<sup>89</sup> In this first interview Annie provides all response options for each of the statements. In this interview the questions and answers flow smoothly; Tina comes in with no gap with her response to Statements 1 and 2 (lines 72, 76) and Statement 6 (line 91). For Statements 3 and 7 she pauses briefly with a thinking ‘u:m (.)’ (line 83) and ‘tu::m’ (line 90) before responding. The response to Statement 4 comes after a long 3.6-second pause. However, there is little repetition, no clarification and little trouble in the interaction.

In giving the preface to this question in other interviews, Annie sometimes pauses or draws breath before going on to the first statement. On one occasion she says she ‘wants’ to read through the statements, rather than ‘I’m going to read you some statements’ as suggested by the script. Sometimes the stress is on different words in the statement or in the list of response option. In general the variations could be considered minor, as they do not appear to alter the information that would be provided by the respondent. Yet, as standardisation is the key pre-requisite for accurate measurement, the responses cannot be considered statistically valid if the questions are asked differently (Fowler and Mangione 1990:14).

Once the individual statements that constitute Q194 are read, however, smooth interactions are more rare. These statements and the responses to them are examined further in Chapter 7.

## 4.2 Discussion

The way of asking questions in the WOC Survey could not by any stretch of the imagination be described as standardised, as expected by the survey designers (AIFS 1998:23).<sup>90</sup> Questions are abbreviated, not asked at all when they are supposed to be,

---

<sup>89</sup> This question preface gives the interviewer the go-ahead to take a longer multi-unit turn, as with story tellers and joke tellers who require longer turns (Goodwin 1984:226; Sacks 1995:Vol.2, p.530).

<sup>90</sup> Survey methodologists accept that different respondents understand questions differently but expect that at least questions can be asked consistently (Phillips 1971:128).

and have their wording changed; the respondent's answers are pre-empted by the interviewer or the respondent. The interviewer asks leading questions and provides the answers to questions herself. Digressions occur, and assessments of the respondent's answer are made. In many instances these variations do not appear to be problematic in obtaining responses for the interview schedule; that is, a response is obtained and a number circled or information entered.

However, such variation is not what is supposed to happen in survey interviews, according to interviewer training manuals (AIFS 1998:23–8; Fowler and Mangione 1990:33; Frey 1983; Frey and Oishi 1995; Institute for Social Research 1976: Chapters 3 and 4; Kahn and Cannell 1957, 1964; Stewart and Cash 1991:Chapter 6), and it is not what the designers of the survey expect. Yet, the information available on the training given to the NLC interviewers suggests rather that these interviewers were particularly well trained and had had more experience than would most interviewers, as a result of working on two related surveys.

Pointing the finger at either the particular survey or the interviewer will give less satisfactory explanations than looking at the nature of the survey as an instrument to measure certain concepts. The WOC Survey is by no means alone in experiencing these kinds of variations. Other research on survey interviews in various fields yields similar findings (Converse and Presser 1986; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2000, 2002; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki 1997; Mazeland and ten Have 1998; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Schober and Conrad 1997, 2002; Suchman and Jordan 1990a).<sup>91</sup>

The crucial insight of this chapter is the way that interviewers and respondents design their talk for the benefit of each other, using the principles of ordinary conversation. These principles conflict at times with the way that interviewers and respondents are expected to behave. At any point in each interview the actions and talk of interviewer and respondent are locally managed; that is, interviewer and respondent co-operate with each other in accomplishing the task together, keeping in mind each other's situations from one turn to the next. Where accomplishing the task becomes problematic, the interviewer and respondent notice this and work to resolve the problem. During training

---

<sup>91</sup> Many of the contributions to Maynard *et al.* (2002) have a bearing on the findings of this chapter. Unfortunately, because this comprehensive edited collection has so recently been published, it is not possible to refer to these contributions in a way that would do them justice at this late stage in the thesis.

interviewers are instructed to be 'friendly' and 'conversational' (AIFS 1998:23–4) and at the same time are also told: 'Always ask the questions exactly as they are worded, in the same order as indicated by the screen, and never skip a question' (AIFS 1998:23). This chapter has demonstrated the impossibility of implementing such instructions. It has also shown how one interviewer and the respondents find interactional solutions to their dilemma.

The overview of questions in this chapter was designed to be simply that. However, it yielded far more variation in the survey instrument than expected. If these variations occur generally in standardised survey interviews in all fields, it is important to examine the implications for the findings that emerge from such research. The general implications for survey interviews as a research instrument are discussed further in Chapter 8. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 examine specific questions, answers and responses that are of particular interest to demographers: women's likelihood of having children, factors determining the timing of births, and measures of the value of children.

## Negotiating likelihood

---

Fertility surveys and fertility components in broader demographic surveys ask a variety of questions in an attempt to obtain some clue to women's and couples' fertility intentions, both to gain some understanding of what may happen in the future and to assess the effect of intervention in the past. The question of whether Australian women are likely to have children in the future is of great interest to demographers, national planning bodies and policy makers (Australian Academy of Science 1995; Kippen and McDonald 1998; McDonald 2000a, 2000b; Office of the Status of Women 1999; *Weekend Australian*, 2001:19–30). The identification of increasing voluntary childlessness adds another dimension to this issue (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000). Interviews with individual women in large-scale surveys such as *Negotiating the Life Course* (NLC) are a major source of data for obtaining a general picture of future fertility.<sup>92</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the way in which the respondent and the interviewer interact to arrive at a response to the *Women on Children* (WOC) Survey questions on the likelihood of having a child or another child in the future (Q165–168). The response must fit the options provided on the interview schedule. In some instances, the interaction is straightforward, and the interviewer has no trouble recording a response; in others, difficulties arise in interaction which must be resolved for the interviewer to circle a number and proceed to the next question. First, the chapter looks at the concept of likelihood and briefly at other survey questions used to obtain an idea

---

<sup>92</sup> Partners also influence decisions about having children (Thomson 1997). Williams *et al.*'s (2001) recent study gives support to the decision to interview women rather than a mix of respondents on these questions. The study shows that Filipino women's responses compared between in-depth and survey interviews were more consistent than those of Filipino men in relation to whether their spouse's most recent pregnancy was wanted. Despite the fact that couples often decide together to have children, it is women who carry children in pregnancy and give birth; data on fertility are collected mainly from women (Santow 1985:91). Couples, both heterosexual and homosexual, as well as individuals, can decide to have children, with or without the assistance of modern technology, but ultimately childbearing still involves a woman's body.

of how likely women may be to have children in the future. Section 5.2 examines how NLC and WOC questions in the interview schedule about likelihood are framed.<sup>93</sup> Then, examples from the interviews show how the questions and answers worked in practice in the interaction between interviewer and respondent. Discussion focuses on how interactional difficulties were resolved and what the interaction tells us about questions on likelihood in these interviews.

## 5.1 Concept of likelihood

Essentially, as it is used by statisticians and demographers, likelihood reflects the statistical sense of the probability of an event occurring (Bailey 1982). The *Macquarie Dictionary* (1985:1004) defines 'likelihood' as '1. the state of being likely or probable; probability. 2. a probability or chance of something. ... 3. Archaic. promising character, or promise'. Likelihood is a synonym for probability; it is a word that represents what it is that can be measured, the outcome of the analysis. In asking respondents *how likely* they are to have another child in the future, survey designers are asking respondents to attach a probability or chance to the outcome of having a child or another child. The task of the interviewer is to interpret the respondent's words in terms of the likelihood of having a child in the future and to circle the appropriate response option. It is then possible to give a percentage or proportion for the likelihood of a particular event occurring. As such, it has meaning for the person performing the analysis.

Much debate has occurred about the questions which will best give an estimate of the likelihood or probability of women having or not having children. Schaeffer and Thomson (1992:42) note the lack of clarity in ascertaining fertility motivation: '...researchers do not always distinguish clearly among wanting, intending, or expecting to have a child'. No easy answer has emerged. The Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in the United States sponsored a workshop in March 1999 to examine recent research it had called for on unintended or unwanted pregnancy. One aim was to improve the understanding of the meaning of 'intendedness', beyond simply whether the

---

<sup>93</sup> The notion of interpretive frame is referred to several times in the course of this chapter. See Chapter 3 Section 3.4.3 for a discussion of frames.

individual or couple was actually planning to have a baby at that time or any time in the near future.

Schaeffer and Thomson (1992) found that expressions of uncertainty were very common in interviews about feelings toward having children. They investigated a variety of categories of uncertainty through content analysis of responses in three types of interviews with the aim of incorporating this understanding into standardised questions (Schaeffer and Thomson 1992:47). They distinguished between 'task uncertainty' that relates to the task of using the pre-determined response categories to express respondents' 'true' state, and 'state uncertainty' that relates to the respondents' uncertainty about what their 'true' state is (Schaeffer and Thomson 1992:38). 'State uncertainty' includes neutrality, lack of clarity, ambivalence, indecision, and mixes of these. These two types of uncertainty are not independent: 'Expressions of uncertainty are produced by the interaction between the respondent's true state and the content and format of a question'. Their conclusion suggests that understanding of the results of such a study could be improved by examining interaction:

The style of developmental work reported here could clearly be improved by tape recording interviews at all stages of developmental work (e.g., unstructured, semistructured interviews, intensive interviews, cognitive interviews, etc.). Analysis of the details of interaction in the interviews could improve our understanding of the impact of the interviewer on the results of such interviews...(Schaeffer and Thomson 1992:60).

Various questions have been devised and tried out in an attempt to obtain more information about the elusive concept of the likelihood of more children being born. Much depends on how many questions on one topic can be asked in any one survey. More focused surveys such as the World Fertility Survey (WFS) and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) can ask many more questions on one topic than can a survey such as NLC that covers a wide range of topics. The WFS questions on preferences for children focused on 'wantedness' or desire for children, and the number of children the respondent would 'like to have'. The WFS also asked fecundity status: *As far as you know, is it physically possible for you and your husband to have a child supposing you wanted one?* (Singh 1980, 1984:62–6). The DHS has two sets of questions for high and low contraceptive prevalence countries respectively. For both high and low contraceptive prevalence countries the questions are about wanting, liking or preferring: *Would you like to have a (another) child or would you prefer not to have any (more) children?* and *After the child you are*



*expecting, would you like to have another child or would you prefer not to have any (more) children?* (Institute for Resource Development and Westinghouse Electric Corporation 1987a:48, 1987b:42; Institute for Resource Development and Macro Systems 1990a, 1990b). The 1977 *Melbourne Survey* asked a number of questions (Q19–37) on how many children women wanted; for example, *Have you decided how many children you will have altogether? When did you first decide how many children you wanted? How many did you want then? Do you think that you are still going to have this number of children or will you be having more or fewer children than that? How many children altogether are you going to have now? Are you trying to get pregnant now? and How many more children do you expect to have?* (Melbourne Survey Group 1979).

Since 1973 the US National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) has asked a series of seven questions on unintended pregnancy; the questions focus on ‘wantedness’ and have remained essentially unchanged, thus preserving comparability over time and allowing analysis of trends (London, Petersen and Piccinino 1995:287). Despite this, London *et al.* (1995:289) note that more information is needed, and the 1995 NSFG contains revisions and further questions.

The development of questions on fertility issues has been difficult. Additional information yielded by a new approach to the way in which questions work in practice may prove useful. The following sections will examine how these particular ‘likelihood’ questions worked in practice.

## **5.2 *Negotiating the Life Course (NLC) and Women on Children (WOC)***

### **Survey questions on likelihood**

The wording of the NLC questions was an attempt on the part of NLC researchers to achieve a better estimate of women’s future intentions than has been available in the past; it was designed to encourage women to orient to thoughts about changing their future, not what they had done in the past (P. McDonald, personal communication, 1997).

The WOC Survey asks two direct questions on the likelihood of having children. Three others are also related, although they do not contain the words ‘likelihood’ or ‘likely’. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the WOC questions were taken from the Wave 1 NLC interview schedule. Although most of the discussion in this chapter concerns Q165, the

preceding question and the three following questions are closely related. Thus, they are included below (Box 5.1) as they appeared on the interview schedule.

**Box 5.1      *Women on Children Survey, Questions 164–168***

<b>Q164: Are you currently pregnant?</b>	
Yes	1 (skip to Q167)
No	2
<b>Q165: How likely are you to have a child in the future, are you VERY LIKELY, LIKELY, NOT SURE, UNLIKELY, MOST UNLIKELY or DEFINITELY NOT?</b>	
Very likely	1 (skip to Q167)
Likely	2 (skip to Q167)
Not sure	3 (skip to Q167)
Unlikely	4
Most unlikely	5
Definitely not	6
<b>Q166: Why is it unlikely that you will have a child?</b>	
<b>Prompt for two reasons (Any other reason?)</b>	
I'm too old	01
Health reasons	02
I don't have a partner	03
My career would be affected	04
My partner's career would be affected	05
My lifestyle would be affected	06
Children cost too much	07
I don't like children	08
My partner does not like children	09
My partner already has children from a previous relationship	10
No major reason, just think it's unlikely	11
Other (specify)	12
If Q165=(4–6) finish here.	
<b>Q167:(If Q154=0 and Q164=not 1):</b>	<b>What will determine when or if you have your first child?</b>
(If Q154=0 and Q164=1):	<b>What determined the timing of this pregnancy?</b>
(If Q154=not 0):	<b>What determined the timing of your first child?</b>
<b>Prompt for two reasons (Any other reasons?)</b>	
I have to get a partner first	01
Convincing my partner that it's a good idea	02
It will happen when it happens	03
Unplanned, it just happened	04
Failure of contraception/family planning method	05
Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage	06
Being established in my career	07
My partner being established in their career	08
Having enough money to buy a house	09
Feeling able to cope with the demands of a child	10
My relationship with my partner being well-established	11

	After having time to enjoy myself before settling down	12
	When I/we feel/felt right about it	13
	Feeling financially secure	14
	Other (specify)	15
<b>Q168:</b>	(If Q154=0 and Q164=not 1):	<b>How many children do you think you will have in the future?</b>
	(Else):	<b>How many more children do you think you will have in the future?</b>
	(If Q164=1):	<b>How many more children do you think you will have in the future in addition to the current pregnancy?</b>
		□□

Source: WOC Interview Schedule 1998

The first question on likelihood (Q165), *How likely are you to have a child in the future, very likely, likely, not sure, unlikely, most unlikely or definitely not?* was a filter question asked of all respondents not currently pregnant, regardless of their age and marital or relationship status.

For Q165 the task of the interviewer was to ask the question and then record the respondent’s response by circling a number from 1 (*very likely*) to 6 (*definitely not*). This number represented the interviewer’s interpretation of this respondent’s likelihood of having another child in the future.

5.3     The WOC questions and responses

5.3.1    *Q164 Are you currently pregnant?*

As shown in Box 5.1, Q165 on the likelihood of having a child or another child was preceded by Q164 on current pregnancy status: *Are you currently pregnant?* In some cases the answer to and interaction around Q164 influenced the interaction that occurred around the question of whether the respondent was likely to have another child in the future (see Chapter 4). Where the respondent’s answer to Q164 seemed to lead in to the following question on likelihood, this question is also discussed here. In most cases, as shown in Chapter 4, the question on current pregnancy status posed no difficulty for respondent or interviewer. One respondent, Andrea, was pregnant at the time of the WOC interview and should not have been asked the question (see Chapter 4, Segment 4.8).

When examining the interaction between interviewer and respondent, it is useful to look at two types of interaction in completing the question–answer sequence: first, cases where interaction proceeded smoothly—where the interviewer and respondent had no difficulty in arriving at an answer; and, second, cases where interaction did not proceed so smoothly, that is, where there were ‘troubles’ or problems in the interaction between the interviewer and the respondent.<sup>94</sup> When interaction is trouble-free, questions and answers tend to flow without hesitation, without significant repair. That is, there are not many ‘ums’, ‘ahs’ and ‘ers’; speakers do not need to correct themselves; word stress is evident; and intonation indicates completion. Conversation analysis (CA) transcription conventions show the detail of interaction in a way that makes trouble visible.

In most cases (21 of 27) posing the question, *How likely are to you have a child in the future, are you very likely, likely, not sure, unlikely, most unlikely or definitely not?* did not seem to create difficulties for the respondent. In these cases it was a fairly straightforward matter for the interviewer to circle an appropriate number from the options given on the form. Some respondents clearly adopted the likelihood frame of the interviewer in their response to the question, using statistical expressions such as ‘one hundred per cent’, ‘five per cent’, and ‘zero chance’ in their responses (Segments 5.4 and 5.5). Others found the frame of the interviewer inappropriate for their situation.

The discussion in this chapter first addresses an interview where the interaction over Q164 means that Annie answers Q165 herself (see Chapter 4). Thereafter, responses to Q165 when it is asked independently are examined. The response circled by Annie on the interview schedule for each respondent is included in brackets after the segment heading.

Liz’s answer to Q164 pre-empts her answer to Q165. Annie asks and answers Q165 herself:

---

<sup>94</sup> Conversation analysts refer to difficulties in interaction, or interaction which does not proceed smoothly (without such phenomena as pauses, hesitation, delay, correction and repair), as ‘problems’ or ‘troubles’ (Heritage and Watson 1979:161; Psathas 1995:18; Schegloff *et al.* 1977; Silverman 1998:124). Schegloff (1987b) notes that troubles can include ‘misarticulations, malapropisms, use of a “wrong” word, unavailability of a word when needed, failure to hear or to be heard, trouble on the part of the recipient in understanding, incorrect understandings by recipients, and various others’.

## Segment 5.1 Liz (Definitely not)

51. Int:                    and (.) are you currently pregnant.  
 52. (1.6)  
 53. Liz:                    at fifty two i certainly hope not.  
 54. Int:                    ah(h)[hh o::h oka::y ] ·hh and so the next one=  
 55. Liz:                    [ah hah hah hah hah hah]  
 56. Int:                    =is,how likely are you to have a child in the  
 57.                    [future, and you've said] definitely not=  
 58. Liz:                    [·hhh forget it                    ]  
 59. Int:                    =[·hh                    and the ] next question is why::?=and we=  
 60. Liz:                    [hng de(h)finitely]  
 61. Int:                    =can say age is a factor t! [·hhh um-  
 62. Liz:                                       [age is a very good factor.

[MMPH#20:51–62]

Liz pauses for quite a long time before answering Q164. When her answer comes it is quite deliberately delivered with emphasis. Annie takes it as a 'no' answer. Following this, Annie uses conversational resources to avoid asking the next two questions for which Liz has already implied the answer. She did not deliver the response options for Q165 as specified in the question.

As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, to ask a question to which one already knows the answer violates the conversational maxim of designing talk to suit the participants—the principle of recipient design (Sacks 1995:564).<sup>95</sup> Houtkoop-Steenstra (1995) provides corresponding examples of violation of this principle from Dutch survey data. Her conclusion is that because questionnaires are 'audience designed' rather than 'recipient designed', the interviewer, if she asks the same thing twice, presents as an incompetent conversationalist who does not listen to what she has been told (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995:104).

Thus, interviewers sometimes answer questions themselves using a conversationally adequate format, having already obtained the information required, showing themselves to be competent conversationalists as well as competent interviewers. Houtkoop-Steenstra (2002) also shows that some question formats are vulnerable to interruption before being completely read out, particularly those followed by a list of response options, as with Q165 in the WOC Survey. To ask Liz the question when she has already given the answer and to provide the response options when they have become redundant would thus risk alienating her as a respondent.

5.3.2 ***Q165 How likely are you to have a child in the future, VERY LIKELY, LIKELY, NOT SURE, UNLIKELY, MOST UNLIKELY or DEFINITELY NOT?***

The 27 WOC respondents' responses to Q165 were circled by the interviewer as shown in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1 Responses to Q165**

Response	N
Very likely	2
Likely	0
Not sure	2
Unlikely	2
Most unlikely	1
Definitely not	19
No response <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

**Note:** 1 The one non-response was because the respondent was pregnant

**Source:** WOC Survey 1998

The vast majority gave the response *definitely not*. Only seven women gave responses other than *definitely not*.<sup>96</sup> First, four examples are given from among those who responded *definitely not*. Subsequently, the responses of the seven women who gave other responses are examined in greater detail.

The interaction in the interviews with the women who responded *definitely not* is on the whole not problematic in terms of achieving a response. Ten were already over 45 years of age when interviewed for Wave 1 NLC, 18 months to two years before the WOC interviews. Others already had two, three or four children and wanted no more. Many of these women were either close to or past menopause; they considered themselves beyond being physically able to bear children or wanting any (more) children. Three women, Lindy, Debra and Tonia, had partners or husbands who had had vasectomies. Others, Helen, Nadia, and Edith, had had tubal ligations or hysterectomies. Karen and Sonya mentioned 'means' or 'procedures' to stop pregnancy.

<sup>95</sup> Chapter 3 Section 3.4.1 discusses recipient design—the notion of designing one's talk to suit the recipient.

The segments from the interviews with Liz, Ricky and Chrissy (Segments 5.1–3) are three fairly typical examples of the kind of interaction that occurred where the response was *definitely not*.

### Segment 5.2 Ricky (Definitely not)

59. Int: are you currently pregnant.  
 60. Ricky: no. i'm sorry. huh huh huh huh huh huh ·hhh [huh  
 61. Int: [so the next  
 62. question how likely are you to have another child in the  
 63. future.  
 64. Ricky: zilch and none¿ ha ha [ha ha ha  
 65. Int: [so definitely not.  
 66. Ricky: definitely POSITIVELY a hundred per cent not.

[MMPH#11:59–66]

Ricky was 40 years old and not in a relationship at the time of the WOC telephone interview. She had two daughters aged 20 and 16. This segment leaves us with the clear impression that it would be difficult for the interviewer to contemplate doing anything other than circle the *definitely not* option. Ricky repeats her unhesitating response in several different ways: 'zilch', 'none', 'definitely, positively, a hundred per cent not', showing no difficulty in accepting the likelihood frame of the interviewer's question. The stress and loudness accompanying these words that express negativity, together with the absence of pauses, add to the interpretation that there is no room for doubt with this respondent. This kind of certainty was characteristic of the *definitely not* responses to this question.

Another indicator that there is no problem in the interaction is the lack of post-expansion (Schegloff 1995:114). Post-expansion is the most common place for indicating disagreement.<sup>97</sup> Ricky's repetition of the interviewer's words 'definitely not', with additional emphasis and additional words of synonymous or overlapping meaning, is further evidence of the agreement established here between Ricky and Annie. Ricky's evident amusement in lines 60 and 64, with extended bursts of laughter, adds to the impression that to suggest such a thing is ridiculous.

<sup>96</sup> The sample contained a disproportionate number of women over 45 years of age (see Chapter 2).

<sup>97</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.5, post-expansion is one of the ways sequences can be expanded. Dispreferred responses regularly lead to expansion of a sequence (Schegloff 1995).

Chrissy is 48 years old and has borne no children of her own. She lives with her husband who brought up three children from his previous marriage. Her answer to Q165 also leaves the interviewer in no doubt:

### Segment 5.3 Chrissy (Definitely not)

76. Int: and how likely are you to have a child in the future.  
 77. Chrissy: i will not.  
 78. Int: definitely not. °okay.° why is it unlikely that you will  
 79. have a child.  
 80. Chrissy: because i'm forty eight;

[MMPH#3:76–80]

Chrissy's clear 'i will not.' with falling intonation and no delay is followed by Annie's formulation in terms of the response option *definitely not*. Here, as in 24 of the 27 of the WOC interviews, Annie does not deliver all the response options to Q165, even though they are part of the question. Omitting the options in these cases is a way for Annie to design her questions for the respondents. Once these women have indicated that their being currently pregnant is a laughable or preposterous idea, Annie might seem an incompetent conversationalist if she were to deliver a long list of options for Q165. The question is generally inappropriate in asking about the likelihood of future pregnancy in the case of older women.

In Marilyn's interview the *definitely not* response is less clear. Marilyn's initial answer is reformulated by Annie as *definitely not*:

### Segment 5.4 Marilyn (Definitely not)

92. Int: um (.) so, the next question is, °contrary to that  
 93. (expectation °)  
 94. how likely are you to have a child in the future. ahhh  
 95. Marilyn: ve(h)ry unli(h)kely hee hee [hee  
 96. Int: [so definitely not?  
 97. Marilyn: ·hh i would thi(h)nk so(h)¿ hhh  
 98. Int: °o(h)ka(h)y.° and the next question is um- why is it  
 99. unlikely  
 100. Marilyn: well.=you'd put down age wouldn't you?  
 101. Int: (°too old°)  
 102. Marilyn: yeah

[MMPH#13:92–102]

This segment from Marilyn's interview demonstrates the power of formulation for the interviewer. Marilyn's 've(h)ry unli(h)kely hee hee hee' does not match any of the pre-



determined options. It is not a *definitely not* response. Annie’s reformulation as ‘so definitely not?’ is followed by strongly hedged agreement from Marilyn: ‘hh i would thi(h)nk so(h)ε hhh’. It is not a definite response. Given the difficulties of disagreeing with formulations,<sup>98</sup> it has to be regarded as a dispreferred response. In degree, ‘very’ is not as strong as ‘most’. Thus, Marilyn’s *definitely not* is open to question in a way that is not the case in the other interviews where this was the response.

The following 10 segments from the WOC interviews come from interviews with women whose responses were *very likely*, *not sure*, *unlikely*, *most unlikely*: Jess, Dale, Kristen, Annegret, Carol, Tina and Lyn. As shown in Table 5.1, none of the 27 responded *likely*. Within this group of seven, some responses were achieved with no difficulty (for example, Tina); others were quite difficult to negotiate (Annegret, Carol, Kristen and Lyn, for example). The interaction over the subsequent question, Q166 *Why is it unlikely that you will have a child?* is included in some cases as sometimes the answer is provided by the respondent or inferred by Annie from information already given. Q166 was not asked of Annegret, Andrea, Dale, Kristen or Jess. Responses are shown in Tables 4.8 and 4.9 (see Chapter 4).

Tina’s interview shows the situation where the answer fits a response option with no difficulty:

**Segment 5.5 Tina            (Unlikely)**

29.	Int:	↑u:m (0.3) <u>are</u> you currently pregnant.
30.	Tina:	no
31.	Int:	a:nd <u>how likely</u> are you to have a <u>child</u> in the <u>future</u> .
32.		<u>very likely</u> , <u>likely</u> , not sure, unlikely, <u>most unlikely</u> ,
33.		or <u>definitely not</u> .
34.	Tina:	unlikely.
35.	Int:	unlikely.

**[MMPH#12:29–35]**

Tina is in her late 30s, has no children and is not in a relationship. She gives unhesitating answers to the question: no pauses or delays are evident, and lengthening does not occur. Tina’s is one of the three interviews where the interviewer gives all response options together with the question in one stretch. This may make a difference to

---

<sup>98</sup> Formulations are discussed in Chapter 3. Heritage and Watson (1979:143) find that confirmations of formulations are ‘massively preferred’. In order to disagree here, Marilyn has to do much more

whether the respondent answers in the frame of the interviewer or not. However, Tina certainly shows no difficulty in responding clearly in this frame.

Lyn's response takes some negotiation but eventually appears to result in a quite certain response. Lyn, aged 38, was in a relationship but not living with that person. She had two children, a boy aged 13 and a girl aged 10. They were leaving to go away on holiday straight after the interview. The following segment from the interview with Lyn shows several instances of directive interviewer behaviour. The segment starts with the interaction over Q164:

#### Segment 5.6 Lyn (Most unlikely)

55. Int: °okay.° ↑a::h are you currently pregnant.  
 56. Lyn: um (.) no¿=↑where does-↑is there a- a TV in the  
 57. background [(°or something°)?]  
 58. Int: [↑y e a h ] i think the phone hu-  
 59. hung u:p. and then (.) it's- uh it- stopped.  
 60. Lyn: oh >can i-< yes. the children >are watching TV.<can i  
 61. put it down. hang on.  
 62. Int: yes that's fine=[i'll hold on  
 63. Lyn: [yes  
 64. (18)  
 65. ((click))  
 66. (39)  
 67. Lyn: >okay.< sorry Annie. i'm right now [yep¿  
 68. Int: [that's okay. u::m so  
 69. the that (last) question was are you currently pregnant  
 70. and you said no.=  
 71. Lyn: =no.  
 72. Int: and how li:kely are you >to have another child in the  
 73. future.<  
 74. Lyn: a:h i don't think i will have another child.  
 75. Int: so would you say you're not sure, unlikely, most  
 76. unlikely, or definitely not.  
 77. (1.6)  
 78. Lyn: u:m hhh (4.0) <it's something that i don't see  
 79. occurring,>  
 80. Int: °okay.° so we [could say]  
 81. Lyn: [ but ah ] (4.0) o-oh >i dunno.< (0.3)  
 82. =[five] per cent possibility?  
 83. Int: [hhh ] o(h)ka(h)y. so should we say most °unlikely.°  
 84. [°is that oka:y?°]  
 85. Lyn: [m o s t mo]st unlikely.  
 86. (2.0)  
 87. Int: a::nd the next question i:s >°why is it unlikely that  
 88. you will have another child.°<

[MMPH#2:55-88]

Lyn interrupts the interview to hang up the phone in the room where the children are watching television, ostensibly because of the noise of the television interfering with the

interview. That she does not notice this interference earlier (this segment is nearly three minutes into the interview) and that she notices it when asked whether she is currently pregnant suggests that perhaps the question was sensitive or private for her and not for her children's ears. When Lyn returns to the telephone, Annie checks the response to Q164 before asking Q165. As with Liz's, Ricky's, Chrissy's and Marilyn's interviews, Annie does not deliver the response options with the question.

The question of whether she is likely to have another child in the future does not pose much initial difficulty for Lyn. She gives a negative response, preceded only by 'a:h': 'a:h i don't think i will have another child.' However, Lyn's response does not fit the interviewer's frame of likelihood (shown by Annie's stress and lengthening on the word 'likely' in her asking of the question), and the hedge 'i don't think' makes her answer less certain.<sup>99</sup> Only then does Annie give Lyn four of the six response options as they appear on the interview schedule. Lyn does not answer immediately, 'u:m hhh' and a very long pause begin her turn. When she does answer, she continues to use a different frame from the frame of the question for her answer. Both Lyn's responses so far (lines 74, 78) are framed in terms of what she herself sees and thinks; she does not respond in terms of 'likelihood'. Her responses imply that there may be other factors outside her control that make it likely or unlikely, but that as far as she can see, she will not have another child. The interviewer starts to formulate a new attempt with 'so'. Lyn interrupts, and with indications of a dispreferred response ('but ah (4.0) o-oh >i dunno.< (0.3) five per cent possibility?'), gives a response that fits the statistical concept of 'how li:kely'. Annie then reformulates this in terms of the response options in front of her, suggesting the reasonable option of 'most °unlikely°. She asks Lyn for confirmation: 'is that oka:y?'—a question that predicts a 'yes' response.

This type of directive probing is the easiest thing for interviewers to do in the stressful situation where they cannot get the respondent to give an answer that fits the pre-determined response options (Fowler and Mangione 1990:44), once the interviewer has enough information to hazard a guess as to the respondent's answer. Lyn repeats the words 'most most unlikely'. The stress and falling intonation give the impression that she is now definite about her answer and accepts the candidate answer of the interviewer.

---

<sup>99</sup> Hedges as ways of 'hedging one's bet' are discussed in Chapter 3 Footnote 56.

The interviewer's delivery of the question here—without delivery of the response options—raises some issues for the following interaction. The question has six possible answers which should be read aloud by the interviewer in one stretch of talk, in order to give the respondent the chance to hear all the response options from which she may choose (Fowler and Mangione 1990:34).<sup>100</sup> In Q165 the response options indicate clearly that the response must be about degree of likelihood. Without these options, the respondent does not know that her answer must be in those terms. Lyn, for example, assumes that she give an answer in her own terms. This leads to prolonged interaction to sort out the correct frame. Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki (1997:304) note, however, that in quality-of-life survey interviews where interviewers were asking scripted questions with three possible answers, interviewers 'hardly ever produce the entire /question/ + /answer options/ structure in this way. They mostly deliver the three options in a staged way.'<sup>101</sup>

Annie, also, often does not deliver the question plus response options in one stretch. In the segment above, this leaves the way open for Lyn to use her own frame for her initial response. This means that further interactional work must be done to negotiate an allowable response. Whether reading out the response options would have resulted in a different frame for Lyn's response is unclear, especially as she persisted with her own frame even after the options were given to her. What response Lyn would have given if Annie had not asked a question predicting a 'yes' response is also unknown. Fowler and Mangione (1990:35–7) note that sometimes the differences created by unstandardised wording can be substantial. If Annie had suggested a different response option perhaps Lyn would have been placed in a different response category.

For Carol, the question is difficult and achieving a satisfactory response takes longer:

---

<sup>100</sup> Fowler and Mangione (1990:34) comment: 'Virtually every interviewer's manual that we have examined has "reading the questions the way they are written" as a basic first principle of good interviewing technique. On the surface, it would appear to be a rule that is both easy to understand and easy to follow. Hence, it may be somewhat surprising to learn that interviewers often do not read questions the way they are written'.

<sup>101</sup> Fowler and Mangione (1990:34) cite four studies, conducted in organisations that 'put more than average emphasis on methodological rigor', that found the rates at which interviewers changed wording ranged from 20 to 40 per cent (Bradburn and Sudman 1979; Cannell and Oksenberg 1988; Cannell, Fowler and Marquis 1968; Fowler and Mangione 1986).

## Segment 5.7 Carol (Unlikely)

63. Int: and are you currently pregnant.  
 64. Carol: no. hh ·hh [·hh  
 65. Int: [how likely are you, to have a child in the  
 66. future.  
 67. (1.3)  
 68. Carol: mmm  
 69. Int: very likely, likely, not sure, unlikely, most unlikely,  
 70. or definitely not.  
 71. Carol: ·hh ↑well, i wouldn't say, definitely not.=but  
 72. ↓unlikely.  
 73. Int: unlikely. (°okay°) (2.3) and (.) why is it unlikely that  
 74. you will have a child.  
 75. Carol: ↑umhh ↑probably because of the stage i'm at in my ↑job.  
 76. hh if- if i stop now, (1.0) ·hh then i've gotta ha-  
 77. (1.0) ·hh ↑well=if i had a baby, i guess i'd want to- hh  
 78. ·hh um hh sh- it would be difficult to do my job, on a  
 79. part time basis.=right? and i wouldn't want to work full  
 80. time with a- small child. ·hhh (0.6) because of the sort  
 81. of job it is.  
 82. Int: (°right°) so i'll just put that (°part time [um not]=  
 83. Carol: [mm hm,]  
 84. Int: =applicable for job)  
 85. Carol: um- ·hh not- yeah=but i think it's important to note,  
 86. not because- ·hh it's not a financial consideration.  
 87. [it's] mo::re a career consideratio[n.=  
 88. Int: [yeah] [yes. yes. well there  
 89. is [one] thing- one option here, that says my career=  
 90. Carol: [·hhh]  
 91. Int: =would [be] affected so [obviously that's (the one)  
 92. Carol: [hhh] [yeah.  
 93. Carol: that's the one. hh ·hh

[MMPH#15:63-93]

Carol's pause before answering (line 67) may not be hesitation about the likelihood of having another child so much as not being able to predict the response frame for the question. Again, Annie has not delivered all the response options, as noted above for Liz, Lyn, Chrissy, Ricky and Marilyn.

However, the transcription shows also that Carol's reason for being unlikely to have another child does not initially fit the response circled: 'My career would be affected'. Annie's summary on the interview schedule of Carol's answer (lines 75-81) reads: 'part time not applicable for job'. Neither the response circled nor the additional written explanation really captures what Carol is saying about needing to be at home with a small child. Even though later (lines 92, 93) Carol does say that it is about her career, the outcome on the interview schedule is a response that ignores the element of the needs of a small child, mentioned by Carol in lines 77-81. The part of Carol's response that concerns children is not an obvious part of any of the responses provided for that question.

The difficulty with field-coded questions such as Q166 is that the respondent does not know the list of response options on the interview schedule (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1996:207–8). Because of the time constraint operating in interviews and the need to obtain a response, it is often easier for the interviewer to suggest a response than to embrace the complexity of what the respondent says or to wait for the respondent to provide an answer that fits one of the allowable options. Houtkoop-Steenstra (1996:214), Smit (1995) and Smit *et al.* (1997) demonstrate that this happens often in the case of field-coded questions.<sup>102</sup>

Dale's initial answer is 'never'; the response eventually recorded is *not sure*.

#### Segment 5.8 Dale (Not sure)

54. Int: ( ) a:nd are you currently pregnant  
 55. Dale: no huh huh huh [haw haw ha] hh ha ha [.hh]  
 56. Int: [huh huh ] [.hh] >\$it's  
 57. probably just as we[ll]< hh ]  
 58. Dale: [hhh ] yea(h)eh heh heh \$i  
 59. [couldn't clope couldn't cope\$ ha ha ha  
 60. Int: [( )]  
 61. Dale: .hhh ha[:  
 62. Int: [hhh u:m .hh so how likely >are you to have a  
 63. child< in the future.  
 64. Dale: never huh huh ha no .hhh u::m no well we think one's  
 65. \$going to be enough at thi(h)s sta(h)ge\$ [but ]  
 66. Int: [yes- so-]  
 67. Dale: [.hhh]  
 68. Int: [well] i- i'll give you the options within- (.) [very]=  
 69. Dale: [yep ]  
 70. Int: =likely likely ↑not sure. [unlikely]ly most unlikely=  
 71. Dale: [okay ]  
 72. Int: =[or definitely not.  
 73. Dale: [.hh okay.  
 74. Dale: .h probly not sure,  
 75. Int: not sure, [at this stage,]  
 76. Dale: [not sure ] at this stage yea::h huh  
 77. [huh  
 78. Int: [(i'll just write )  
 79. Dale: we'll see how this one turns \$ou(h)t [huh] huh an=  
 80. Int: [hhh]  
 81. Dale: =we'(h)ll go from the(h)re\$ [hhh yeh heh heh hhh ya  
 82. Int: [( first time we  
 83. ask [you  
 84. Dale: [yeah

[MMPH#8:54–84]

Dale's first child was born four months before this interview and she was on maternity leave at the time. Like Ricky, she laughs in response to both the question on current

<sup>102</sup> Field-coded questions are discussed at length in Chapter 6. See also the note on field-coded questions

pregnancy status and the question of how likely she is to have another child in the future. However, unlike Ricky's response, there ultimately seems to be a great deal more uncertainty in the way that she responds. At first (line 64), she appears quite definite, coming in immediately with 'never huh huh ha no'. This may be a continuation of the laughter shared by Dale and Annie around whether she is currently pregnant, suggesting a joking or exaggerated response 'never'.<sup>103</sup> The prospect of another child when she has a very young baby is horrific enough for Dale to give such a categorical response. However, later in line 64 the in-breaths and the additional words before her response 'hhh u::m no well' indicate a dispreferred response.<sup>104</sup> Dispreferred responses require more interactional work. The number of turns that it takes the interviewer and respondent to arrive at an answer, compared to a situation where all is going smoothly, is an additional indication that this answer is difficult for Dale. Dale's response (line 64–5) suggests that she feels that the answer socially expected of her is that it is likely that she will have another child.

The interviewer does not take up 'never' as a serious response from Dale, perhaps because of their shared humour earlier.<sup>105</sup> She gives Dale a chance to respond differently by reading her the response options on the interview schedule. At line 71 Dale says 'okay' after the interviewer has given 'not sure' as an option, the option on which she and Annie eventually agree. Because Annie (line 75) has taken up Dale's earlier phrase, 'at this stage' (line 65), agreement can be reached about the issue of timing. Dale is not sure now about whether she will have a child in the future. Dale's 'okay' at this point says 'I hear and accept what you say; this sequence is potentially over for me'.<sup>106</sup> She continues to indicate that she is ready to take her turn with in-breaths and another 'okay' (line 73) which indicates that, as far as she is concerned, Annie need say no more. It seems most likely that Dale has heard the option that she can respond to while Annie is

---

in the discussion on Q166 in Chapter 4.

<sup>103</sup> The laughter shared by Annie and Dale here is doing affiliative work, as is their sharing of jokes about Dale not being able to cope if she were pregnant at this stage.

<sup>104</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.2.6.

<sup>105</sup> This chapter does not pursue the role of laughter in these interviews. However, the role of laughter in interaction has been explored from a CA perspective by such researchers as Collins (1997), Jefferson (1979, 1984c, 1988), Jefferson *et al.* (1987), Lavin and Maynard (2002), O'Donnell-Trujillo and Adams (1983), Jefferson and Schenkein (1972). See Chapter 3 Section 3.4.2.

<sup>106</sup> See Chapter 3 Section 3.2.1 on the role of 'okay' on closing sequences.

running through the list of options. Where Dale's uncertainty comes from we cannot know from this interaction.

In lines 79 and 81, however, Dale's uncertainty is not evident. She does not hesitate in responding that she and her husband will 'see how this one turns out' and will 'go from there', again with accompanying laughter. Later, in the in-depth interview, Dale elaborated on her feelings of not being sure about whether she was likely to have another child. Her husband was in a new job and working very long hours. She felt that she did not want to have another child if he could not be involved in the parenting. In the context of low fertility in Australia, whether women like Dale are likely to have a second child is an important issue. Being sure that responses reflect women's true situations is crucial.

This interview is a clear example of how not observing the rules of standardised interviewing results in a more accurate response. To record Dale's first answer 'never' as the response would miss the uncertainty that developed through the interaction between Dale and Annie. The lack of standardisation is problematic for survey methodologists, but in this interview a conversational approach appears to have led to a more valid response.

Kristen has trouble with the frame of the question:

#### Segment 5.9 Kristen (Not sure)

113. Int: a:nd (.) are you currently pregnant.  
114. Kristen: nnno.  
115. Int: how likely are you to have another child in the future.  
116. Kristen: hh we:ll i'd like to have another one but it all depends  
117. how my cycle finishes.  
118. Int: °ri:ght°  
119. Kristen: i would like to have another one before my cycle  
120. finishes, but it:s up to the gods nɔ:w [·hh ] [s o  
121. Int: [°ri:ght°] [so do  
122. you think (.) very likely, likely, or not sure.  
123. Kristen: ↑u:m=  
124. Int: =or unlikely.  
125. Kristen: well i'd like to, but i'd sa:y (.) probably not sure.  
126. Int: °not sure°  
127. Kristen: yeah (1.0) i'd like to have another one but it all  
128. depends what appens i guess

[MMPH#6:113–128]



In this segment the interviewer's frame and the respondent's frame are not congruent. Here, Kristen frames her response in terms of whether she would like to have another child (lines 116, 119, 125), whereas the interviewer persists with the frame of the question—how likely? The similar base of the two words is striking here. Both interviewer and respondent attempt, through persistence, to persuade the other to accept her frame. In line 125 Kristen starts a third attempt at her frame 'i'd like to' but combines this with the frame of the question when she continues 'but i'd say (.) probably not sure.' Although this suggests that Kristen cannot predict likelihood, that the decision is not hers, this response is enough for Annie; she has an allowable response. This is evident from her sequence-closing third (SCT), °not sure° (line 126), a way of closing off the question-answer sequence that is often said more softly than surrounding talk.<sup>107</sup>

Kristen ostensibly accepts Annie's attempt to end the sequence, saying 'yeah'. However, she makes yet another attempt (line 127) to frame the answer in terms of liking rather than likelihood. Annie does not go ahead with the next question on the schedule. Thus, despite Kristen's one-second pause (line 127) Annie loses the opportunity to take her turn, allowing Kristen her fourth attempt at talking about what she would like to do. Annie does not give any further response but goes directly on to the next question (not shown). In most cases in the WOC interviews, Annie gives SCTs to close off each question or to check that she has the correct response. Thus, having obtained the response 'not sure', she does not address further the respondent's difficulty with the frame of her question. It is clear that Kristen is not accepting her frame and to try again would prolong the interview to no clear purpose, as none of the options fit.

Jess and Annie negotiate a response to Q165 quite smoothly, in spite of Q164 being inappropriate for Jess. Like Dale, Jess had a young baby at the time of the interview:

---

<sup>107</sup> Sequence closing thirds (SCTs) are discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.1.

### Segment 5.10 Jess (Very likely)

51. Int: a:nd (.) are you currently pregnant.  
 52. Jess: no:: hhh [(h)huh huh huh huh [huh nha ha ha ·hhh  
 53. Int: [(h)hh [·hh \$(that's) a funny question  
 54. [eh¿\$ ↑u:m ]  
 55. Jess: [\$(that was)] down the list\$  
 56. Int: so how likely are you >to have a child in the< future.  
 57. Jess: ↑°yea[:h°-  
 58. Int: [very likely, like[ly,  
 59. Jess: [very.  
 60. Int: very likely. [((microphone noise)) (° °)  
 61. Jess: [°yeah°

[MMP#9:51-61]

This segment is a further example of an untroubled interaction in terms of the way in which the response is negotiated. Jess' enthusiastic '↑°yea[:h°' (line 57) and the overlapping response (line 59) that interrupts the interviewer in her stream of options give the impression that Jess is very keen to respond to this question. The absence of pauses suggests that she has no doubt about her responses and that she is certainly very keen to have another child (she was in her late 30s at the time of the interview). Like Dale, whose baby was also only four months old at the time of the interview, Jess laughs heartily and long in her response to the question, *Are you currently pregnant?* The interviewer joins in the laughter, commenting that it is a funny question, a comment that distances her from the writer of the question—the absent third party—and absolves her from responsibility [Suchman, 1990 #196:233-5].<sup>108</sup> The following smiling comment from Jess, '\$(that was) down the list\$', indicates that she realises that Annie has asked her an inappropriate question, possibly a realisation coming from Jess's own interviewing experience.<sup>109</sup> She may be guessing that Annie was reading the questions straight down the list on the interview schedule without thinking about whether the question was appropriate for her as a new mother. In fact, Annie was following instructions correctly in asking this question of all women, regardless of the age of their children. Again, this interview segment illustrates the way in which audience-designed questions cause more complicated interaction between interviewer and respondent, even though they may achieve a jointly negotiated response. Affiliative work appears to repair potential damage to the relationship.

<sup>108</sup> This is an example of affiliation between interviewer and respondent; they mutually acknowledge that the survey question was inappropriate for Jess.

<sup>109</sup> Jess mentioned during the pre-call that she had been involved in survey research.

continue speaking:<sup>110</sup>

## Segment 5.11 Jess

82. Jess:

**[MMPH#9:80-2]**

second child.

the interview.

### Segment 5.12 Annegret

19. Annegret:

[MMPPh#1:18–21]

falling final intonation, that 'yes' is a definite 'yes'. There is no ambiguity. Both

<sup>110</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.1.2, a rush-though is a way for speakers to hold on to their turn when otherwise recipients might consider the turn complete; there is ‘no interval between the end of a

participants demonstrate their satisfaction. The lack of dispreferred responses and the lack of post-expansion are further evidence that neither party is having a problem with the interaction and, therefore, the question.

The interviewer's answer, the assessment<sup>111</sup> 'that's good', is puzzling, given that interviewers are encouraged not to pass judgment on respondents' answers (Fowler and Mangione 1990:46). On the face of it, this assessment appears to be a value judgment about the respondent's marital status. An alternative interpretation is that Annie's 'that's good' (line 20) signals her satisfaction that the respondent easily fits a category that is straightforward for the interview process. Thus, it is easy for Annie to circle the appropriate number on the interview schedule.

This speculation is supported to some extent by the fact that questions in surveys about relationships of the type *Are you married?* or *Are you in a relationship?* are notoriously difficult for many respondents to answer and for the survey designer to formulate since such a wide range of possible answers can be given, depending on the kind of intimate or sexual relationships the respondent does or does not have (McDonald 1985; Randall 1988:1.2.8). The question of marriage is of interest to demographers mainly because of its connection with childbearing, in that most children born in Australia in the 1990s are still born within marriage (Commonwealth of Australia 1994:17). However, in Australia, as elsewhere, the situation is complex because of the variety of possibilities that now exist for people living together in consensual heterosexual and homosexual partnerships, as well as legal marriage (Caldwell, Caldwell, Bracher and Santow 1988a; Carmichael 1998; Carmichael and Mason 1998). These relationships may not, and in some circumstances legally cannot, involve marriage but can certainly involve the birth of children. On the other hand, relationships that produce children are not necessarily relationships where the people involved live together (Khoo and McDonald 1988). The upshot is that responses are also often difficult to code.

---

prior and start of a next piece of talk' (Sacks *et al.* 1974:731).

<sup>111</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.2, an assessment 'articulates a stance taken up—ordinarily by the first pair part speaker—toward what the second pair part speaker has said or done in the prior turn' (Schegloff 1995:121).

In the following segment of talk later in the same interview with Annegret, the question–answer sequence is not so straightforward and becomes unsatisfactory for both the interviewer and the respondent.

**Segment 5.13 Annegret (Very likely)**

44. Int: and how li:kely are you >to have another child< in the  
 45. future,  
 46. Annegret: ↑a(h) ha::hh it's a <boi- biological huh huh determinant  
 47. the(h)re,> [.hh=  
 48. Int: [ri::ght,  
 49. Annegret: =we're trying. huh huh  
 50. Int: #oh you're trying,#=  
 51. Annegret: =yeah,=  
 52. Int: =so its (0.3) its (.) li:kely,  
 53. Annegret: ↓well, (0.6) t! huh huh it's as likely as hhh >you  
 54. know< huh [huh hhh huh huh]  
 55. Int: [\$as likely as you ] can determine\$, .hh so  
 56. we could say very likely, ↓really, [(so) °you know° =  
 57. Annegret: [yeah,  
 58. Int: =i- that's your intention, isn't [it.  
 59. Annegret: [yeah.  
 60. Int: °i'll put down that's your intention° (2.0) (yup)

[MMPH#1:44–60]

Two difficulties occur for the interviewer in this segment. Both difficulties are to do with the way the question is handled. The first involves the way the interviewer frames, reformulates and eventually redefines the question as it is worded in the questionnaire; from a question about likelihood it becomes a question about intention. The second concerns the way in which the interviewer deals with the respondent's answers.

From the beginning, the way in which the interviewer frames this question shows the respondent that the key concern for the interviewer is the question of likelihood. The interviewer places the main stress on 'how li:kely' (lines 44, 45). This reflects the options available to her on the interview schedule: *very likely, likely, not sure, unlikely, most unlikely or definitely not*, which set up her interpretive frame for the answer. She gives less focus to the question of having another child by speaking the words 'having another child' more quickly than the surrounding talk. Annie does not provide Annegret with the response options for this question; thus, as in the case of interviews discussed earlier, Q165 appears more like a field-coded question that gives no clue to the respondent as to the frame of her response.

The respondent's answer indicates that this framing of the question poses difficulties for her. She cannot answer in a way that satisfies the interviewer, compared with, for example, the interaction illustrated in Segment 5.12, where the turns follow on without delay and where the result is a quick and efficient question–answer sequence. Instead, she delays her response (line 46), with both in-breath and an almost strangled, embarrassed 'laughter'.<sup>112</sup> These delaying mechanisms signal that for this respondent the answer is problematic, saying in effect, 'I can't answer this question in the way that you would like'. Her response is a dispreferred response. We cannot know whether Annegret is concerned about giving an appropriate response to the question or whether she is simply grappling with its meaning for her; we only know that this question requires her to do more work in giving her response than when interaction is unproblematic. Her response seems also to signal that this may be an emotive issue for her; this is underlined by the fact that she stumbles over a word, a rare event for this respondent in this interview, and refers to a 'biological huh huh determinant', implying that it is out of her control.

It is clear at this point in the interview that the question about likelihood is impossible for the respondent to answer because she feels that the outcome lies outside her control, whereas the term 'likely' in the question assumes that the respondent does in fact have some grasp of likelihood. That is, in Annegret's case, the question assumes that she understands the issues involved in the likelihood of conception and has some control over what is likely to occur. Pomerantz (1984b) shows that when a speaker meets such a problem in obtaining a response in ordinary conversation, various interactional resources are available to solve the problem. The speakers will often modify their position. Survey interviews provide little scope for modification of questions because of the importance of standardisation.

The error correction and 'huh huh' in the phrase 'boi- biological huh huh determinant' is another clue that Annegret is searching for a way to put her answer that might mean something to the interviewer. In error Annegret says, 'it's a boi-', identical in sound to

---

<sup>112</sup> O'Donnell-Trujillo and Adams (1983:190) note in relation to embarrassed laughter in conversation: 'Insofar as initial interaction [first-time meeting] is typically characterised by "nonpersonal disclosures", laughter can serve to render a serious, perhaps more personal, disclosure less serious, at least for the conversational moment'. Research on laughter in interaction shows it to be systematically produced and socially organised (Jefferson *et al.* 1987:152).

'It's a boy!'; this is interesting in itself, a Freudian slip, given the topic of having children and given that conversation analysts believe that language use is not accidental or haphazard (Schegloff *et al.* 1977:381). Levelt (1989:487) notes that speech errors are 'especially likely to arise when there are attentional lapses, or when there are high processing demands (such as in fast speech). Repair situations are almost always "loading" moments for a speaker...'. Speech errors—slips of the tongue—are also quite rare (Levelt 1989:199). The question *How likely...* appears to impose a considerable processing demand on Annegret.

Jefferson (1974:199) notes that the use of 'uh' in (American) English has often been perceived as a 'trivial, haphazard occurrence', but shows that in fact it is an orderly interjection with a particular function in the conduct of social interaction. As well as citing the use of 'uh' as a way of correcting an error that one almost produced but did not, Jefferson cites instances of 'uh' being used by speakers to change their language to fit more appropriately with the language of the recipient, signalling 'I need more time to think about how to put this'. Sometimes a speaker wants to choose a more formal option as a way of negotiating or reformulating a particular identity. For example, in the courtroom, using the term 'officer' rather than 'cop' or 'pig' to address the judge presents a more formal person who can speak the judge's language, thereby lessening the social distance and minimising the chance of a large fine. It may be here (line 46) that Annegret is searching for a word that is appropriate to a formal interview situation but also a word that will fit the interviewer's frame of 'likelihood'. 'Determinant' does this without Annegret having to give up her sense that the issue is more that she has no control over the biological aspect of likelihood.

However, once the respondent's answer does not immediately fit the interviewer's frame of 'likely', considerable work has to be done by the interviewer to resolve the problem of finding an answer to her question that will fit the categories on the interview schedule in front of her. Annegret's answer is thus a problem for the interviewer; it contains no useful topical material to help Annie circle a response. Annie says 'ri::ght,' (line 48), with lengthening of the vowel and rising intonation. This suggests that she is not satisfied with this answer, giving Annegret the go-ahead to say more. This 'ri::ght,' is the first part of a three-turn sequence by which speakers generate a topic interactionally in

conversations (Button and Casey 1984).<sup>113</sup> The preferred next activity is a newsworthy-event-report in a next turn: that is, something that could constitute a topic of interest. The respondent takes up the invitation immediately, but the topic that she introduces switches the frame of her answer back to the other concept in the original question, that of 'having a child'. She does this by giving the positive response 'we're trying' (line 49), implying the continuation 'to do something', that is to have another child. The 'trying' indicates failure so far. Laughter and in-breath accompany this response, once again perhaps pointing to her difficulty in talking about this issue and her reluctance to answer the question as asked (Sacks 1987).<sup>114</sup>

The response of 'we're trying' still does not fully satisfy the interviewer, however, because it does not figure in the response options provided and because of the lack of congruence in their respective frames. Annie's response, 'oh you're trying', indicates that she regards Annegret's introduction of this new topic as potentially informative,<sup>115</sup> but she rejects this potential new topic, as it does not fit the likelihood frame of her initial question and does not help her in circling a response on the form. Annie then reformulates what Annegret has said, using 'so' (line 52) in another attempt to bring the question to resolution.<sup>116</sup> However, because her (albeit hesitant) reformulation is still in terms of the problematic 'likelihood' ('so its (0.3) its (.) likely'), Annegret is yet again frustrated in her attempt to answer the question in the way she would like. Once again, she challenges the frame set by the interviewer, indicating by her delay and laughter that

---

<sup>113</sup> Here, Annie's turn allows Annegret to raise any topic she likes. It does not, however, mean that Annie is committed to this topic in her search for an appropriate response to her initial question. Thus, she can reject it once she realises that 'trying' does not relate closely enough to likelihood. Both speakers then are involved in the generation of this topic, although it is Annie who abandons the pursuit of the topic. It gets her nowhere in filling in the form. See Chapter 3 Footnote 47.

<sup>114</sup> Jefferson (1984c) examined the role of laughter in talk about troubles. She found a recurrent phenomenon: 'A troubles-teller produces an utterance and then laughs, and the troubles recipient does not laugh but produces a recognizably serious response' (Jefferson 1984c:346). This kind of laughter is prominent in this segment of the interview with Annegret. Coates (1996:107), in her study of talk among women, found that laughter was a common feature of talk among women friends, and in the context of embarrassing stories women used laughter as a way of releasing tension.

<sup>115</sup> Annie's 'oh' is marking her acknowledgment that Annegret has given her some new information. In this case, 'oh' could also be seen as other-initiated repair; Annegret's first response was not acceptable to Annie, as shown by her use of 'right'; her attempt to repair this is marked by 'oh'. See Chapter 3 Section 3.2.3 for detailed discussion of formulations.

<sup>116</sup> Houtkoop-Steenstra (1996:216) shows similar reformulation of answers to fit response categories from Dutch data.



she cannot unreservedly say 'yes'. Perhaps she feels that it is not likely at all that they will have another child. She cannot yet say 'It's not likely at all', given that she and her husband are still 'trying'. Again, she gives a dispreferred response. Pomerantz (1984b:155) provides examples of this phenomenon:

... if a recipient manifests behaviors that indicate that he or she is having difficulty or is hesitant to respond, the speaker is in the position of guessing or inferring or determining what the trouble is. One possibility is that the recipient may not know what (or who) the speaker is talking about because an identification is not clear. Or perhaps a word is used that the recipient does not know. ...In short, a recipient may have difficulty in understanding because of the poor construction of the assertion.

Pomerantz (1984b:156) notes that, if an assertion is simply unclear, it may be relatively easily solved, but in the case of an 'offensive, insulting, silly, or wrong assertion', the trouble may be more complicated to repair. Both Annie and Annegret have trouble with each other's assertions here.

Annie interestingly takes up Annegret's earlier mention of 'determinant' (line 55), together with yet another attempt to introduce her own frame of 'likely', using the words 'as likely as you can determine', with laughter. Once again she reformulates what she seems to see as a reasonable 'no problem' compromise between what the respondent seems to want to say and what she as interviewer can accept in terms of circling a number on her form: 'so we could say very likely, ↓really,'—a clear example of interviewer bias (Fowler and Mangione 1990:40). Annie's 'we' emphasises potential agreement. For the respondent to give a clear 'no' to this reformulation is not possible—she is still hoping that she will conceive; the rising intonation of her 'yeah,' response indicates her ambivalence. She is not able to accept the continued reformulation of the answer in terms of 'likelihood', and still cannot agree. The ambivalent 'yeah,' with non-final intonation (line 57), on the other hand, gives the impression that she also wants it to be very likely that she will, in fact, have another child.

The interviewer then redefines the question again, this time in terms of intention. Finally, Annegret is really backed into a corner when presented with a third formulation, this time a direct yes–no question predicting a 'yes' answer, framed as a statement with falling intonation: 'that's your intention, isn't it.' and she eventually responds 'yeah.' She can agree with this; after all it is her intention. She has tried twice to talk about her lack of control in the matter (lines 46ff, 53ff), but this does not fit the format of the question

for which the interviewer must circle one of the numbers on her form. It is unlikely that Annegret will try again to address the question of likelihood.<sup>117</sup> Her response seems to be more a case of acquiescence and agreement with the last question posed than genuine agreement with the outcome *very likely*.<sup>118</sup> It seems, too, that the interviewer senses Annegret's unease with the precarious process of negotiating this response; she says that she will 'put down' that this is Annegret's intention (although there was no place on the interview schedule among the allowed responses to the question for this to occur). She circled *very likely* and wrote 'intention' in the margin next to the *very likely* option, but there was nowhere for this information to be entered during on the NLC CATI system. It seems more likely that this was a face-saving solution, as the validity of the final response is doubtful. Categorising Annegret's response as *very likely* also meant that she was not then asked Q166 *Why is it unlikely that you will have another child?*

Subsequent to Q166 the difficulties for both interviewer and respondent increase. Annegret remembers Q194 from the last time she was interviewed and tells Annie directly, with laughter, that she considered the questions silly then and still considers them silly (see further discussion in Chapter 7). The interviewer continues to ask and the respondent continues to respond, even though she is not happy with the questions. The co-operation is sometimes a little strained; for example, when the interviewer wants to repeat Q194, the respondent replies quickly with no gap, 'yeah no no i remember it'.

Towards the end of the interview there appears to be explicit recognition by the interviewer that it has been difficult. Annie thanks Annegret for agreeing to take part in the survey, and the respondent replies softly, "that's okay". Annie then gives the assessment 'good'. The respondent laughs:

---

<sup>117</sup> Given that disconfirmations of formulations 'jeopardize the sense of "the talk thus far"' (Heritage and Watson 1979:144), Annegret's second disconfirmation has made negotiating a response even more precarious. It means starting from square one again and challenges Annie to find an acceptable solution. Schegloff and Sacks (1973:303ff) note that formulations act as shutting-down techniques; they are used as 'candidate preclosings', and as such are useful techniques for interviewers in ending each question and its response.

<sup>118</sup> Houtkoop-Steenstra (1996:216-9) notes that in Dutch 'yes' often may not mean 'yes', but rather be acquiescence in the face of difficulties in addressing the frame of the question.

### Segment 5.14 Annegret

163. Int: (okay) that's all the questions.=  
164. Annegret: =right=  
165. Int: =·hhh ↑now thankyou very much for agreeing °to take  
166. part in the survey,°  
167. Annegret: °that's okay.°  
168. Int: good.  
169. Annegret: uh huh huh huh hhh

[MMPH#1:163–9]

The speculations that arise about Annegret's difficulty in answering the interviewer's question about likelihood in this first interview segment are substantiated by the evidence from the follow-up in-depth interview I conducted with Annegret the next day.<sup>119</sup> In the in-depth interview it emerged that she was having great difficulty in becoming pregnant and was quite pessimistic about eventual success. She reported that she and her husband were under extreme pressure from work; they had been 'trying' for over a year and had had various tests and medical procedures in an attempt to conceive or identify the reason why they could not. This information could not emerge in the structured telephone interview because of the constraints under which the interviewer was operating. Annie needed to complete the interview in a reasonable period of time, and her brief was to obtain answers to the questions as set down on the interview schedule.<sup>120</sup>

This sort of difficulty has already been noted in the research on both structured (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995; Suchman and Jordan 1990a) and semi-open interviews (Mazeland and ten Have 1998). Suchman and Jordan (1990a:232) pointed out that the interaction in survey interviews 'relies on, but also suppresses' crucial elements of everyday conversation, thus creating an unresolved tension between the survey as an interactional event and as a neutral measurement instrument. They presented five interviews as case studies revealing classes of trouble of 'a potentially more widespread nature' (Suchman and Jordan 1990a:232). Their argument is quoted at length here because of its close relevance:

---

<sup>119</sup> Some parts of the in-depth interview with Annegret are discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>120</sup> The phenomenon of differing responses in interviews is noted by Bumpass and Westoff (1970:Ch.5 cited in Caldwell and Hill 1988:3): 'Several studies have demonstrated how questions both on intentions "Do you want another child?" and on behaviour e.g. contraceptive effectiveness varying with intention...evoke varying responses during interview depending on the respondents' circumstances at the time of interview'.

Our argument is the following:

1. There is an unresolved tension between the survey interview as an interactional event and as a neutral measurement instrument. On the one hand, the interview is commonly acknowledged to be fundamentally an interaction. On the other hand, in the interest of turning the interview into an instrument, many of the interactional resources of everyday conversation are disallowed.
2. The success of the interview as an instrument turns on the premise that (a) relevant questions can be decided in advance of the interaction and (b) questions can be phrased in such a way that as long as they are read without variation, they will be heard in the intended way and will stimulate a valid response.
3. The premises of 2 fail insofar as (a) topics that come from outside a conversation run the risk of irrelevance, and (b) as an ordinary language procedure, the survey interview is inherently available for multiple interpretations of the meaning of both questions and answers.
4. Compared with ordinary conversation, the survey interview suppresses those interactional resources that routinely mediate uncertainties of relevance and interpretation (Suchman and Jordan 1990a:232).

Some of the problems mentioned by Suchman and Jordan are particularly evident in the excerpt from Annegret's interview above. Because the interviewer cannot vary the question without consequences for standardisation, the information that could come from Annegret about her difficulties in becoming pregnant—difficulties that greatly affect the likelihood of her having another child—is lost.<sup>121</sup> In everyday conversation it would be possible and perhaps more likely for Annegret to say, for example, 'The question is not about likelihood for me; it's out of my control'. However, she accepts the frame of the survey question as interpreted by the interviewer, in this case with stress on 'likely', and compromises her information to fit this frame (she, too, has experience in formulating questionnaires and understands the rules of survey interviews). Suchman and Jordan (1990a:240) note this as part of the inherent nature of survey interviews:

Even more than the lecture or debate (where speakership and topic are determined ahead of time but by at least one of the participants), the survey interview presents two parties with an agenda conceived by a third, the question writer, who is not present at the event ... To the extent that in the survey interview negotiation of meaning is suppressed, channels are lost through which the intent of the question writer could be communicated or the interpretations of the respondents assessed.

---

<sup>121</sup> Clearly, responses can be cross-tabulated with responses from other questions, such as Q166, to provide more information. However, in Annegret's case, Q166 was not asked because the response to Q165 was *very likely*.

## 5.4 Discussion

In the NLC and WOC telephone interviews, interviewers were able to talk with their respondents about the interpretations of the questions, but were not able to make any judgment on how questions should be interpreted, especially when they struck difficulties in the congruence of frames. For the respondents task and state uncertainty sometimes coincided (Schaeffer and Thomson 1992:38). If these negotiations of meaning were recorded at the time, a resource would exist for examination of the questions for future reference. Although this does not solve the problem of loss of information, it provides a resource for improving questions and interviewers' handling of them. This might be of use where questions are experimental or where experience has shown that it is difficult to formulate a suitable question.

Schober and Conrad's (2002:91) experiment allowing interviewers to adopt practices that result in non-standardisation shows that 'Interviewers empowered to use the full range of techniques for grounding understanding in natural conversation—providing substantive clarification, both solicited and unsolicited—help improve response accuracy.' Their conclusion is that

We need to dispense with the notion that interviewers can behave in ways that don't influence responses. We need to examine further whether the deviations from strict standardization that occur in current interviewing practice are harmful or helpful. If we abandon the underlying message-model assumption that meaning resides in words, we are forced to take seriously the proposal that interviews are only standardized when respondents interpret questions the same way...Ultimately we may need to redefine what standardization ought to be (Schober and Conrad 2002:91).

Conversation analysis shows us that some WOC respondents were able to respond to the researcher's and interviewer's frame of *how likely?* and that others were not. Some respondents framed their answers clearly in terms of likelihood, particularly those whose responses were *unlikely* or *definitely not* (and who in any case outnumbered the others). Coral's 'zero chance', Lyn's 'five per cent', and Ricky's 'one hundred per cent not' are examples of this congruence in frame. This way of framing the question was easier for some women to adopt than for others. Older women, such as Ricky and Liz, who already had the children they wanted, were very clear that they were likely to have no more. However, for younger women who already had at least one child the question was not so easy. Some, like Jess, said that they were likely to have another child. For some,

however, depending on their personal circumstances, the question could be quite difficult; both Kristen and Annegret wanted another child but were experiencing difficulty in becoming pregnant or carrying the pregnancy to term. For Dale, it was too early after the birth of her first child to say. A common assumption is that questions such as this are sensitive (Coombs and Freedman 1964:112,117), whereas in the case of Annegret and Kristen the problem is lack of congruence in the frames of the researcher—represented by the question, the interviewer and the respondent.

The ambiguity of the concept of likelihood leads to difficult interactions. In addition, the interviewer is in a difficult position, attempting to maintain a precarious social relationship without the resources of ordinary conversational interaction while having to negotiate an answer. When the respondent is also uncertain of her situation there is no easy resolution. This situation is not unique to this survey or this question, as shown by other research (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 1996, 1999, 2002; Mazeland and ten Have 1998; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Schaeffer and Thomson 1992; Suchman and Jordan 1990a).

How relevant the statistical concept of likelihood is for respondents in general and respondents in the WOC interviews is unclear. How do women think about 'having children'? Do women in fact think of having children in terms of 'likelihood'? In interviews, how do they respond to a question framed in terms of 'likelihood'? Is this congruent with their own ways of framing the topic? These questions led me to wonder about my own experience in conversations with women about pregnancy and children. It seems to me (and others that I have asked informally about this) that women often talk about likelihood in relation to becoming pregnant, but not in terms of the totality of processes involved in 'having a child'. Spender (1980:81–4), in *Man-Made Language*, suggests that women's meanings may sometimes be blocked, and that the so-called hesitancy evident in the way women talk may be sometimes be a result of 'translating' and 'monitoring' their language and meanings to fit the demands and stereotypes of others. Devault (1990) argues also that language is often inadequate for women; 'woman talk' is often a way for women to resist 'man-made metaphors', though these terms should not be taken too literally (Devault 1990:112).

The concept of likelihood of having a child seems to conflate at least four processes: deciding to have another child, becoming pregnant, carrying the pregnancy successfully to term, and giving birth, ending up with the woman 'having a child'. Thus, the question

*How likely are you to have a child in the future?* may be difficult to answer in cases where one or more of these processes is problematic. Coming immediately after the respondent has been asked whether she is currently pregnant, the frame with which the respondent approaches the question on likelihood is also more likely to be pregnancy. The word 'have' contributes to the ambiguity of the question, as it can be interpreted in different ways. A couple that adopts, for example, can also be said to 'have a child'. In the 2001 Australian television series *Mum's the Word* on SBS television, which presented focus-group discussions with women, one woman who had had a Caesarian section noted that she had to think twice about whether she had 'had a child'. In any case, it may be difficult to contemplate the larger question of how likely it is to have a child, if achieving the pre-requisite of becoming pregnant is problematic.

Annegret and Kristen are cases in point here. Both want another child but, according to the information they provide during the process of negotiation with the interviewer, becoming pregnant is the problem. In Annegret's case, the interviewer reformulates the question of likelihood in terms of intention (to have another child), leading her to circle *very likely*, and in Kristen's case in terms of being unsure (of becoming pregnant), leading her to circle *not sure*. The number circled on the interview schedule could not reflect this information.

Stewart and Cash (1991:69) suggest that for cases such as this where the respondent's and interviewer's frames are not congruent, the answer is 'inaccessible' to the respondent. Accessibility 'refers to the respondent's ability to answer questions because of social, psychological, or situational constraints' (Kahn and Cannell 1964:112 cited in Stewart and Cash 1991:69). Their suggestion is that 'inaccessible' questions be delayed until the interviewer has a good relationship with the respondent. It seems, however, that the problem is not familiarity with the respondent so much as the question being inappropriate for that respondent. It may in fact be a problem of the response being inaccessible to the interviewer rather than to the respondent.

The problem for demographers remains how best to obtain an understanding of the factors that result in a figure for likelihood, probability or chance, and is closely related to the issue of desire, motivation, intention, possibility and probability: whether births are wanted or unwanted, intended or unintended, planned or unplanned. Likelihood, however, is not simply a matter of wanting, intending or planning to have a child. Many

other factors, often beyond the conscious control of women or couples, play a part in conception, carrying a pregnancy to term and giving birth to a live, healthy child, as represented in the 'intervening variables' (Davis and Blake 1956) and 'proximate determinants' (Bongaarts 1978, 1982; Bongaarts and Potter 1983).

## 5.5 Conclusion

It is evident from the analysis of the interview segments above that the responses emerging from the interaction between respondent and interviewer are negotiated. Both respondent and interviewer are involved in negotiating likelihood, giving indications to each other that some aspect of the other's frame is either acceptable or causes them trouble. The existence of problematic interaction has been recognised in principle for decades (Kahn and Cannell 1957:58), but the tools of CA enable a close attention to the minute details of this interaction. Interaction between interviewer and respondent is collaborative: it is locally managed and responses are jointly constructed. Thus, in examining how responses are negotiated, neither the interviewer's nor the respondent's contribution can be usefully examined in isolation. In general, however, it is not possible to predict how different questions would work in practice. Interviews must be tape-recorded and interaction analysed closely.

In this set of interviews there are two problems. First, Q165 uses a frame that is problematic for a number of respondents because the women themselves may not be able to determine how likely they are to have a child, partly because it conflates four processes: deciding to conceive, conceiving, carrying a pregnancy to term, and having a healthy live birth. The lack of a clear frame for the responses when Annie does not deliver all response options leads to inadequate responses (Fowler and Mangione 1990:150). Second, the women themselves cannot know what is likely to happen in the future. Schaeffer and Thomson (1992:) note that their 'state uncertainty' thus compounds the 'task uncertainty' imposed by the question. CA is able to point to these difficulties in a way that enables us to look further at instances where the question is a problem. CA is useful in 'grey areas'—where the respondent's and interviewer's frames are different, where the respondent cannot give an unequivocal response, and where, as a consequence, the interaction is difficult.



An interesting insight is the way CA sheds light on what respondents regard as socially preferred and not preferred responses. Maybe some women (Dale and Ricky are examples here) feel that society expects them to have more children and that the socially preferred response to Q165 is 'yes, it is likely that I will have another child.' Another benefit of CA, therefore, would be in identifying women who might elaborate such ideas in a face-to-face interview. Perhaps some women feel that they should be having more children or that they would like to have more children, given different circumstances.

The identification of dispreferred responses is a valuable tool in identifying where troubles occur. These responses are fairly easy to identify, and could therefore be of considerable value to interviewers in isolating questions where probing is necessary or where a different tack could be taken. Instead of wasting time pursuing a response which cannot fit the frame of the question, the interviewer might switch to an alternative predetermined question or set of questions. In the case of likelihood this could be a question on wanting, intending or planning a pregnancy, or a question on barriers to pregnancy.

The examination of interaction in the WOC interviews on Qs164–8 has been useful in demonstrating the way in which a focus on interaction highlights the collaborative nature of interviews. A CA perspective would also provide a useful dimension for evaluation in pre-testing questions, enabling survey designers to trouble-shoot and formulate alternate strategies. One strategy to be considered for Q165 on likelihood might be to have a fall-back question or questions that could identify the nature of the respondent's difficulty in answering the question. These questions could then be analysed separately. It would be clear that these women's responses could not be compared with those where statistical likelihood was not problematic. The information would then not be lost from the survey; whereas using the question as it stands results in the loss of valuable information to those who most need it.

As Suchman and Jordan (1990a: 240) and Schober and Conrad (2002) suggest, interviewers need to be allowed flexibility to deviate from the standardised schedule. One argument often cited is that this would take much longer, and would therefore add to the cost of surveys (see discussion in Schober and Conrad 1997). However, a brief look at the segments above shows that when dispreferred responses are given, much

more interactional work needs to be done by both parties. This takes more time than a straightforward response anyway. A negotiated response that makes use of, rather than suppresses, conversational resources may be a truer reflection of the respondent's situation, as the interview with Dale on Q165 shows. With quick identification of dispreferred responses and an alternative set or sets of questions, the objectives of the survey might still be met. This implies, then, that interviewers need as careful and extensive training as possible on the purpose of the survey and the intent of each of its questions. CA could also be a very useful tool in the training of interviewers in handling responses to difficult questions. Taping, transcribing and examining transcripts of interviews provides a dimension of feedback otherwise unavailable to interviewers, supervisors and trainers and allows questions of language and interaction to be taken into account.

## Determining the timing of a first child

---

The timing of first births is an important issue for demographers. The extent to which women plan or determine the timing of the birth of a child, the mechanisms and processes involved in this 'planning', and the extent to which first births are deferred, are the subject of much demographic research worldwide. Recent interest in low fertility countries has focused on why women are delaying having children or not having them at all (Council of Europe 1998; Lesthaeghe and Willems 1999; McNicoll 1998; van de Kaa 1998). Australia shares this focus (Australian Academy of Science 1995; Australian Broadcasting Commission 1999; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1999; Kippen and McDonald 1998; McDonald 2000a, 2000b; McGuinness 2000:37; Young 1997). Ruzicka (1976:25–7) noted that fertility decline in Australia coincided with the availability of 'modern, effective and socially acceptable contraceptives', particularly 'the pill' from the early 1960s, and that variations in the timing of marriage and the spacing of births were likely to occur more frequently. During the 1970s, a 'new revolution' in Australian fertility patterns was beginning (Caldwell *et al.* 1976:4).

This chapter focuses on the interaction between the interviewer and 25 of the 27 *Women on Children* (WOC) Survey respondents in negotiating responses to Question 167 (Q167) on the timing of the respondent's first birth or pregnancy. Chapter 4 has shown that Q167 was asked mostly as scripted, with some minor differences in emphasis. Because the responses given seem to differ according to the age of the woman, the analysis in this chapter divides the WOC respondents into two groups: those born in or before 1950 and those born later. Sections 6.1 and 6.2 outline Q167 and its response options, showing how the women responded in *Negotiating the Life Course* (NLC) Wave 1 1996–7 and the 1998 WOC Survey. Section 6.3 gives a conversation analysis (CA) perspective on the talk in interaction between interviewer and respondent for this question, examining the way in which the responses for Q167 were negotiated. Interviews where the

interaction on Q167 between interviewer and respondent is relatively straightforward (that is, leads to a speedy response) are presented in contrast with those where the interaction is troublesome. The two groups—the pre-1950 and post-1950 women—are discussed separately. The chapter concludes with a more detailed discussion of what makes the interaction over Q167 difficult.

The impression at ‘first listen’ was of more uncertainty and hesitation in the interaction over Q167 compared with earlier questions in the WOC Survey.<sup>122</sup> The recorded interaction and subsequent transcription also showed difficulties with Q167 in the WOC Survey that warrant further investigation. Thus, the issues examined in this chapter emerged during the process of transcribing and analysing transcripts of the interviews using a CA or talk-in-interaction framework, rather than being determined in advance on the basis of previous research. A comparison of how the WOC women responded to the same question in 1996–7 and 1998 is included, as the comparison raises further issues relating to how the responses to this question are interpreted.

Again in this chapter, as only one interviewer was used for the WOC Survey, the interviewer comes under close scrutiny. Usually, even during training, interviewers are not subjected to the kind of close scrutiny that is possible using the micro-detail of CA transcription. However, the objective of this chapter is primarily to examine the effects of particular questions on the interaction between interviewer and respondent rather than to evaluate the performance of the interviewer as such. Some questions place interviewers in a difficult position in their task of obtaining responses and completing interviews. The analysis of interaction indicates the difficulty in obtaining responses for Q167. Because of the nature of field-coded questions, this would in all probability also be the experience of other interviewers. Oppenheim (1966:45) notes in respect of field-coded questions: ‘Even with the best interviewers in the world some bias and some loss of information cannot be avoided’. Previous research has confirmed this (Foddy 1993; Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000; Oppenheim 1966; Smit 1995; Smit *et al.* 1997; Sudman and Bradburn 1982).

---

<sup>122</sup> Schaeffer and Thomson (1992) and Schaeffer *et al.* (1993) note and address similar uncertainty in asking women about wanting a child and asking respondents about labour-force participation.

## 6.1 Questions on timing of first birth

Various questions in fertility surveys have addressed the issue of timing of births in terms of when the child was born and whether that timing was wanted by the mother. For example, the World Fertility Survey (WFS) included the question *How many years and months after your (first marriage, previous birth) did you have this child?* (Cleland *et al.* 1987). The focus of the WFS was on when children were born (Santow 1985), rather than on what determined the timing of the first or any birth. The information obtained by these questions was used in conjunction with data on contraceptive use to ascertain the degree to which births were planned. The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)<sup>123</sup> Phase III asked two questions about fertility planning: *At the time you became pregnant with (NAME), did you want to become pregnant then, did you want to wait until later, or did you want no children at all?* and *How much longer would you like to have waited?* It did not ask about the reasons for the timing of any birth.

Australian fertility surveys have also contained questions related to these aspects of the decision to have children. Because these surveys are concerned mainly with fertility, more questions can be asked than in a survey that covers a number of areas of interest. The first major survey of fertility and family planning in Australia was the 1971 *Melbourne Survey*, also called the *Australian Family Survey*, 1971 (Australian Family Survey 1971b). This survey, covering married women, was well placed to analyse the changes taking place as a result of the introduction of the pill and IUD in the 1960s (Caldwell *et al.* 1976:ii).

The 1971 *Melbourne Survey* questions included some on timing of the first birth: *Did you first become pregnant more or less than a year after marriage?* If more than a year, *Was this deliberate?* If yes, *Why did you wait?* If the reasons were partly 'economic improvement,' the respondent was asked, *Did you achieve this?* Pregnant women were asked, *Before you became pregnant, did you hope to become pregnant just when you did?* together with some questions on advantages and disadvantages of becoming pregnant at that time. Women with one or more children were asked, *With regard to your first/second ... child, would you have preferred to have that pregnancy at an earlier date, at a later date, or at the time you did, or would you have preferred*

---

<sup>123</sup> The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) *Model 'A' Questionnaire with Commentary for High Contraceptive Prevalence Countries* (Macro International Inc. 1995a) is the most relevant to Australian women.

*to have avoided it altogether? and When you got pregnant, had you been specifically wanting to get pregnant, or had you been specifically wanting not to be pregnant at that time, or didn't you really mind?*

The 1977 *Melbourne Survey*, comprising a follow-up of 1971 respondents, asked a variety of questions of each of the three groups in the survey. Married people were asked about timing through intention, with supporting questions on working, contraception, trying to get pregnant, and miscarriages: *Were you doing anything to put off or avoid getting pregnant before the first child? When you got pregnant were you trying to get pregnant right at that time?* Recently-married women were asked, *How many months after marriage would you like the first child to be born? Did you deliberately delay (or are you deliberately delaying) having the first child? Why?* Women with two children whose first pregnancy was more than a year after marriage were asked, *What were the main reasons for the delay?* Two reasons were wanted, with 17 from which to choose.

In-depth questions in the 1977 follow-up included questions on what determined thinking on family size, why the respondent wanted a child, how she made up her mind, whether it was a decision or just happened, and various factors that might have influenced the decision. Two in-depth questions (Q17, 18) concerned timing directly: *What was special about the time you chose?* and *If you had known what you know now, would you still have decided to have the baby then? Do you have any regrets?* If the baby was not planned, the respondent was asked, *How did it happen?* (Q19). In-depth questions asked of the recently married women were: *What else should you have or should you do before having a baby? Can a woman put off having children for too long? Is 30 really too late to start having a family? Why?* And of those with no children: *What will be the main things that will help you to decide the right time to have a child?* Many other questions touched less directly on the issue of timing.

The 1986 Australian Family Project asked: *Thinking back to when your first child was born, how did you decide to have a child at that particular time in your life? Were there any circumstances that made you have him/her later or sooner than you might otherwise have done? What were those circumstances?* (Q61). As with any of the survey questions mentioned in this discussion, the way in which they work in practice in interviews cannot be examined without transcription and analysis of interview data.

6.2 NLC and WOC Q167 on the determinants of timing of first pregnancy or birth

Wave 1 NLC asked questions on many areas of work and family life, including fertility; however, because of the length of the survey, a limited number of questions on fertility issues was included. Wave 1 NLC respondents were asked a question in 1996–7 on what determined the timing of their first or most recent birth, or what would determine the timing of a future birth. The WOC Survey in 1998 asked identical questions. These questions had not been asked in previous surveys in this way (P. McDonald, personal communication, 1999).

As shown in Chapter 4, Q167 had three variants to be asked of NLC and WOC respondents in different situations.<sup>124</sup> The wording and options are shown below (Box 6.1):

Box 6.1 Women on Children Survey 1998, Question 167

Q167: (If Q154=0 and Q164=not 1):	What will determine when or if you have your first child?
(If Q154=0 and Q164=1):	What determined the timing of this pregnancy?
(If Q154=not 0):	What determined the timing of your first child?
Prompt for two reasons (Any other reasons?)	
I have to get a partner first	01
Convincing my partner that it's a good idea	02
It will happen when it happens	03
Unplanned, it just happened	04
Failure of contraception/family planning method	05
Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage	06
Being established in my career	07
My partner being established in their career	08
Having enough money to buy a house	09
Feeling able to cope with the demands of a child	10
My relationship with my partner being well-established	11
After having time to enjoy myself before settling down	12
When I/we feel/felt right about it	13
Feeling financially secure	14
Other (specify)	15

**Note:** The question variants listed here are given the identifiers (a), (b), and (c) in Table 6.2: (a) *What will determine when or if you have your first child?* (b) *What determined the timing of this pregnancy?* and (c) *What determined the timing of your first child?*

**Source:** NLC 1997, WOC Interview Schedule 1998.

<sup>124</sup> Q154 reads: 'How many children have you ever had?' and Q164 reads: 'Are you currently pregnant?'.

Having a choice of three question variants was not problematic in Wave 1 NLC because the interviews were computer assisted. However, in the non-CATI<sup>125</sup> WOC interviews the wrong variant was sometimes chosen. This decision was probably no more complex than decisions about skips and filters in other surveys,<sup>126</sup> but Annie had previously used the CATI system for Wave 1 NLC and may have had trouble adapting. For example, the first variant listed, referred to as (a), was asked mistakenly of one respondent, Tina; the second (b) was asked mistakenly of one respondent, Andrea; and the third (c) was correctly asked of the other 23 respondents.<sup>127</sup> The trouble Annie had in delivering Q167 has been discussed in Chapter 4 (see, for example, Segment 4.37). The focus of the current chapter is the negotiation of the responses.

As mentioned earlier, Q167 in NLC and WOC is a field-coded (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:4–5, 107–127), or semi-open (Smit 1995:117), question.<sup>128</sup> To respondents, a field-coded question appears to be an open question that they can answer in their own way. The interviewer, on the other hand, has in front of her a list of possible response options for the question. In effect, for her, it is a closed question with ‘forced-choice’ responses (de Vaus 1995:86; Foddy 1993:135; Oppenheim 1966:44–5). Sudman and Bradburn (1982:294) describe a field-coded question as follows:

In a field-coded question, the question itself usually is identical to that of an open-answer format. Instead of a blank space for the interviewer to record the respondent’s answer verbatim, a set of codes is printed. Interviewers should simply check each topic that is mentioned. Field coding should be avoided unless the interviewer records the verbatim response as well, so that the field coding can be checked when the questionnaire is processed.

---

<sup>125</sup> Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

<sup>126</sup> Skips and filters of this sort are used, for example, in the DHS *Model ‘A’ Questionnaire* (Macro International Inc. 1995a), as with other DHS surveys, which use a questionnaire administered by an interviewer rather than computer-assisted telephone interviews.

<sup>127</sup> Chapter 4 discussed the way in which having three variants sometimes caused difficulties for the interviewer in deciding which question variant to ask. Two respondents, Beverly and Chrissy, were not asked this question because their responses to Q165 *How likely are you to have another child in the future, are you very likely, likely, not sure, unlikely, most unlikely or definitely not?* were ‘definitely not’. Q167 was skipped for them. Tina was asked Q167 in error, having also responded ‘unlikely’, a response that should have meant skipping Q167. Andrea was also asked in error, as she had already had a child and should have been asked variant (b) of the question. The confusion in Tina’s and Andrea’s interviews would have been avoided had the computer-assisted telephone interviewing system been used for the interviews.

<sup>128</sup> See mentions of field-coded questions in Chapters 4 and 5.



The respondent's answer, then, has to be translated and formatted (coded) by the interviewer into one of the allowable response options (Fowler and Mangione 1990:88). Thus, the design of the question sets up a contradiction between the interviewer's task and the respondent's expectation of how she should answer. It is common for field-coded questions to have a category 'Other', perhaps because of this contradiction.

NLC contains numerous field-coded questions. Q166 *Why is it unlikely that you will have a(nother) child?* is one example already discussed (Chapter 5). It may be that field-coded questions are used in telephone surveys when the list of possible responses makes the question too long to be easily read out over the telephone. De Vaus (1995:95) notes:

The reliance on respondent's retaining all the spoken information in the question places real limits on how much information can be packed into one question. If *too many response categories* are included in the question, there is a danger that the respondent will arbitrarily select one.

Fowler and Mangione (1990:88–9) and Oppenheim (1966:44–6) warn against using field-coded questions because they cause 'considerable bias and loss of information'. In Oppenheim's (1966:45–6) words: 'The question is not how we can avoid loss of information, but rather at what point we can best afford to lose information'. Without recording and analysing the interaction on any question, including field-coded questions, it is difficult to determine how well interviewers succeed in obtaining the information intended by the survey designer and where information might be lost.

### 6.3 The responses to NLC and WOC Q167

Instructions for Q167 on the WOC interview schedule (as with the NLC interview schedule) asked the interviewer to prompt for two reasons: *Prompt for two reasons (Any other reasons?)*. *Any other reasons?* was suggested as the neutral prompt. One woman had no reasons listed, and two women had five (more than two reasons would not been recorded had the CATI system been used). Table 6.1 shows the distribution of responses to this question according to the 15 response options provided on the WOC questionnaire.

**Table 6.1** Reasons recorded as determining timing of respondent's first birth, same respondents, NLC 1997 and WOC 1998

Reason	NLC <sup>a</sup>	WOC <sup>b</sup>
01 I have to get a partner first	2	1
02 Convincing my partner that it's a good idea	0	1
03 It will happen when it happens	0	0
04 Unplanned, it just happened	8	11
05 Failure of contraception/family planning method	2	5
06 Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage	3	3
07 Being established in career	2	2
08 My partner being established in their career	2	2
09 Having enough money to buy a house	2	1
10 Feeling able to cope with the demands of a child	2	3
11 My relationship with my partner being well established	4	5
12 After having time to enjoy myself before settling down	0	0
13 When I/we feel/felt right about it	7	12
14 Feeling financially secure	2	5
15 Other (specify) <sup>c</sup>	1	8

**Notes:** **a** First and second responses are not distinguished here but are distinguished in Table 6.2. In 12 cases a second response was not recorded (see Table 6.2). **b** The number of responses recorded for each response option does not add up to two reasons for each respondent as more than two responses were sometimes listed for this question. Responses given here are from 25 respondents. **c** In all but one case 'Other' was not circled, but a comment was written on the form under the response option 'Other'.

**Sources:** NLC 1997, WOC Survey 1998.

Two reasons were much more frequently recorded than others: (04) *Unplanned, it just happened* and (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it* (Table 6.1).

Option (15) *Other (specify)* was the next most frequent, although it was circled only once of the eight times it occurred. Notes written on the interview schedule near (15) *Other (specify)* in the case of the other seven respondents are also taken to be 'Other' responses. The response options (03) *It will happen when it happens* and (12) *After having time to enjoy myself before settling down* are not among the responses noted for the WOC women. The individual reasons given, however, are not as useful in showing what determined the timing of the first child as the combinations of responses for each woman.

Table 6.2 shows the responses recorded for each of the women asked this question in NLC Wave 1 and the WOC Survey.

Table 6.2 Responses to Q167, NLC 1997 and WOC 1998

Respondent birth year	NLC		WOC		
	R1	R2	question	reasons <sup>1</sup>	interviewer comment
<b><u>In or before 1950</u></b>					
Beverly	NA		NA		
Chrissy	NA		NA		
Debra	04	-	(c)	04, 05	'young and silly'*
Helen	06	04	(c)	06	
Joanne	11	-	(c)	13, 14	
Kerry	04	-	(c)	04, 06	
Lindy	15	-	(c)	10, 13	'trying for 8 years and pregnancy happened'*
Liz	09	08	(c)	04, 13, 14	
Merilyn	13	-	(c)	06	
Nadia	04	-	(c)	04	
<b><u>After 1950</u></b>					
Andrea <sup>2</sup>	11	13	(b)	15	'Age—wanted to have a child before getting any older'
Annegret	07	11	(c)	02, 07, 13	
Carol	11	07	(c)	07, 08, 09 11, 14	
Coral	04	05	(c)	04, 05	
Dale	10	08	(c)	10, 13, 14	'age was a factor didn't want to be too old. Friends had kids & we liked hanging around them so we decided to have one too'*
Edith	05	-	(c)	04, 05, 13	
Jenny	13	-	(c)	08, 10, 11, 13, 14	
Jess	01	14	(c)	04	
Karen	04	-	(c)	04, 11, 13	
Kristen	06	13	(c)		'trying c. fertility drugs'* 'had a miscarriage & then in the next cycle after miscarrying had a failed contraceptive method & got pregnant with D.'*
Lyn	04	-	(c)	04, 05, 13	
Melinda	13	06	(c)	10, 13	
Noelle	13	10	(c)	11, 13	'was getting a bit older'*
Ricky	04	-	(c)	04	
Sonya	04	-	(c)	04, 05	
Tina <sup>3</sup>	01	14	(a)	01	'oops. accidentally asked this. Age<40 yrs old'*
Tonia	13	09	(c)	11, 13	

**Notes:** 1 Interviewer did not circle response option (15); she added written comment in all but one case  
 \*indicates that 'Other' was not circled. 2 Andrea's responses cannot be compared because the responses applied to different births. 3 Tina was asked Q167 in error in the WOC survey; her response is included for interest. - indicates a skip (no response entered). NA Not asked. R1, R2 Response 1, Response 2. (a) *What will determine when or if you have your first child?* (b) *What determined the timing of this pregnancy?* (c) *What determined the timing of your first child?*

**Sources:** NLC 1997, WOC Survey 1998

### 6.3.1 *WOC Survey respondents*

For six respondents only one response option was circled (Table 6.2); in three of these instances the reason given by the respondent was (04) *Unplanned, just happened*, a reason circled for 11 of the 25 respondents. For 11 respondents two reasons were circled. Five of these 11 respondents had the combination (04) *Unplanned, just happened* and (05) *Failure of contraception, family planning method*. The maximum number of options recorded for any respondent was five—Carol and Jenny each had five responses circled. As mentioned before, this problem is the result of using a survey designed for CATI in a non-CATI situation; the problem could not have occurred had the CATI system been used, as it allowed only two responses to be entered on the screen. For one respondent, Kristen, no options were circled, and Annie wrote a comment on the form. Where Annie wrote a comment, in all cases but one she did not circle (15) *Other (specify)*. The next section shows how Annie and the WOC respondents interacted to obtain the responses shown in Table 6.2 above.

### 6.3.2 *Comparison between Wave 1 NLC and WOC Survey*

The women's responses to the same Q167 asked in both Wave 1 NLC in 1996–7 and the WOC survey in 1998 differ considerably (Table 6.2). Only three respondents, Ricky, Coral and Nadia, had exactly the same responses in both surveys; 22 of the 25 differed on at least one reason. Some differed markedly. For example, Lindy had (15) and a skip recorded for NLC, whereas her recorded responses for the WOC Survey were (10) and (13); For Joanne, (11) and a skip were recorded for NLC compared with (13) and (14) for the WOC Survey.

It is not unusual for people's stories to change in different tellings; researchers disagree about the reasons for this and whether it matters (Bernard, Killworth, Kronenfeld and Sailer 1984; Briggs 1986:14; Cicourel 1973, 1974:195ff; Converse and Presser 1986:20–3; Foddy 1993; Ross 1991). Converse and Presser (1986:20) observe that 'it is increasingly apparent that memory questions in general tend to be difficult':

Recalling an event or behavior can be especially difficult in any of several circumstances: if the decision was made almost mindlessly in the first place, if the event was so trivial that people have hardly given it a second thought since, if questions refer to events that happened long ago, or if they require the recall of many separate events.

All WOC women had been asked the question in 1996–7. It might be expected that the reasons older women give for having their first child, often more than 20 years earlier, could have stabilised in the telling. The younger women, however, may still be formulating their stories, and the telling may differ according to the recipient and the interviewer, especially given the format of the question (Foddy 1993:7). Foddy (1993:89) observes:

Unfortunately, given no guidelines about the answers they should give, respondents often change the kind of answers they give when allowed to answer for a second time.

Nevertheless, all women<sup>129</sup> had had at least one opportunity to think through and tell this story in 1996–7 during the first wave of the survey. The difficulty for survey researchers is that it is expected that the same standardised question asked of the same women should yield the same information, regardless of the interviewer and when it is asked.

Foddy (1993:91) notes an additional problem; that is, there is a difference in asking people about intentional and non-intentional behaviour. It is useful to ask people only about behaviour that was intentional:

...the conclusion that is relevant here is that it is sensible to ask people only about their past intentional behaviour. Because respondents are unlikely to be aware of the causes of past unintentional behaviours, it makes little sense to assume that they will be able to recall such processes.

This may be relevant information in the case of the women in the two surveys who had unintentionally become pregnant or for whom intention did not appear to play a role.

The interaction between interviewers and respondents in Wave 1 NLC was not recorded. The comparison between the two surveys is limited, therefore, in that it cannot compare how the responses were achieved in each case. Only the responses can be compared. Even when the same responses are recorded for the WOC Survey and NLC

---

<sup>129</sup> Except for Dale and Jess who had not had their first births at the time of Wave 1 NLC.

Wave 1, it is not clear which WOC response was recorded first. What is clear is that in the two surveys the women answered differently or talked in a different way, or the interviewer behaved differently, or a combination of these differences occurred. The number of skipped second responses for NLC implies that either the interviewer did not probe for a second response in these cases (Table 6.2), or, when prompted with *Any other reason?*, the respondent answered 'no'. A point to note is that the order in which the WOC responses were recorded on the interview schedule is not known, unlike the NLC, where first and second reasons are distinguished. It may be that more than two reasons emerged in the NLC Wave 1 interviews but were not able to be recorded by CATI. Closer examination of the interaction between the interviewer and the WOC respondents will show how responses to this question are negotiated, but does not always show how or at what point in the interaction a respondent's answer became a response option for the interviewer.

#### 6.4 The interaction on WOC Q167

The interaction between the interviewer, Annie, and the WOC respondents for Q167 was not always straightforward, in the sense of two reasons being immediately forthcoming and achieved with the clear agreement of both parties. A rough indicator of whether the interaction was straightforward is the number of turns that it took for the reasons to be negotiated and the response options to be agreed. Easy agreement on a response takes fewer turns than more problematic interaction because less interaction work is required (see discussion in Chapter 3). The number of turns is used as an indicator in this analysis, with the beginning of the interaction marked by the asking of the question and the end of the interaction by the move to the next question. Alternative ways of estimating the length of the interaction would be to count lines of transcription or to time each interaction; however, the number of turns is a slightly better indicator of the complexity of the interaction than a simple measure of time or the number of lines of transcription, as it takes into account the aspect of negotiation of a response between the two interview participants.<sup>130</sup> In any case, the length and complexity of interaction

---

<sup>130</sup> Additional problems with using the number of lines of transcription as a measure are (1) that where the speech is inaudible and, hence, untranscribable, it is difficult to know how the speech would translate into word space; (2) interruptions are difficult to take into account; and (3) different methods of transcription may also yield different numbers of lines.

are useful indicators for survey researchers. This is because the length of interaction as measured in number of turns over each question has an impact on the total duration of an interview and on the overall cost of conducting a survey.

The following discussion deals first with WOC respondents born after 1950, then with those born in 1950 or before. Separate treatment is useful, because the responses of the older women seem to form a distinct group, and a comparison of the two groups highlights some of the changes that have occurred for Australian women in attitudes to determining the timing of their first births. In both groups the interaction ranges from relatively straightforward, with responses negotiated in five turns, to quite complex, taking up to 24 turns to complete the interaction on this question. Where the number of turns is large, more than two reason are sometimes negotiated, even though only two are required by the interview schedule. However, it is often difficult to determine at which point an answer becomes a response. Turn numbers are, therefore, difficult to compare and a rough measure only. As with earlier interview segments, the responses for Q167 in both surveys are included in brackets after the segment number and name of respondent. The first figures are for NLC; those after the semi-colon are for the WOC Survey. For reasons of space, not all interviews are presented in full in this discussion.

#### **6.4.1     *WOC respondents born after 1950***

Seventeen of the 27 WOC women were born after 1950 (Table 6.3). Of these, Andrea and Tina are not included in the discussion on this question (Footnote 5). Table 6.3 shows year of birth, year of marriage and age at first birth for the women born after 1950:

**Table 6.3**      **Year of birth, year of first marriage and age at first birth, WOC respondents born after 1950**

Respondent	Year of birth	Year first married	Age at first birth
Andrea	1961	1982	31
Annegret	1963	1984	31
Carol	1960	1985	28
Coral	1961	1979	20
Dale <sup>a</sup>	1966	1996	33
Edith	1954	1977	26
Jenny	1960	1982	26
Jess <sup>a</sup>	1962	na	37
Karen	1961	1985	29
Kristen	1953	1974	23
Lyn	1959	1982	27
Melinda	1958	1977	23
Noelle	1960	1989	31
Ricky	1959	1982	21
Sonya	1970	1991	20
Tina	1962	na	na
Tonia	1966	1988	24

**Note: na** not applicable

**Source:** NLC 1997; a Dale and Jess had their first births after NLC Wave 1. Their age at first birth was calculated from WOC Survey 1998 data.

Ricky was one of the few respondents whose recorded responses were identical for NLC Wave 1 and WOC (Table 6.2). Her interview, although unclear in parts, was also one of the most straightforward, taking seven turns to complete the question:

**Segment 6.1 Ricky (04; 04)**

81. Int: ↑tu:m now what determined the timing of your first child.  
82. (1.0)  
83. Ricky: °|stupidity.° (0.6) °ha ha ha° ha ha ha .hh mistake. bad  
84. new[s.  
85. Int: [so it was- it was an accident [(like )  
86. Ricky: [oh yea::h. a big  
87. accident heh heh  
88. Int: (ah failure of  
89. contraception )  
90. Ricky: ↑tu:m (.) ( )  
91. unplanned ( )  
92. Int: ( )  
93. ↑now i'm going to ((next question))

[MMPH#11:81-93]

Annie circled only one response on the interview schedule: (04) *Unplanned, it just happened*, although the interaction in lines 88–9 seems to indicate an attempt to obtain a second



reason. This attempt was partly inaudible on the tape<sup>131</sup> but contained the words ‘failure of contraception’, words contained in response option (05) *Failure of contraception/family planning method*. Annie seems to be asking whether (05) applied. This attempt is treated as having failed, as a second reason was not circled and Annie does not continue probing. In line 91 Ricky uses the term ‘unplanned’, which may have given Annie the information she requires to circle (04) on the interview schedule.

This interaction illustrates a number of features common to the interaction on Q167 in the WOC interviews. First, when Ricky, the respondent, answers after a long pause,<sup>132</sup> her answer °↓stupidity.° (0.6) °ha ha ha° ha ha ha ·hh mistake. bad news.’ is not in a form that exactly fits any of the response options on the interview schedule.<sup>133</sup> This happens with all except one respondent in answering this question. Ricky’s answer puts Annie in a difficult position; she has to work out how to interpret it in terms of an allowable response option. She responds with a formulation ‘so it was- it was an accident (like )’.<sup>134</sup> Annie’s formulation also does not exactly match the words of any of the response options. However, Ricky’s answer is a definite ‘oh yea::h. a big accident heh heh’. Ricky uses several terms to describe the reason: ‘stupidity’, ‘mistake’, ‘bad news’

---

<sup>131</sup> Some parts of this interaction with Ricky (lines 87–9) were affected by a buzz on the telephone line and were difficult to transcribe. After this interview, the third WOC interview to be completed, the interviewer changed to another telephone. Some audible words give a clue to what was being said, but in- and out-breaths, pauses, fast and slow speech were not recordable.

<sup>132</sup> Chapter 3 addresses the issue of pauses and hesitation in question and answer sequences. Schaeffer *et al.* (1993) discuss pauses in asking and answering questions about labour-force participation. Pomerantz (1984b) shows that a long pause can indicate three problems for the respondent: an understanding problem; confusion about what is known; and recipient disagreement or lack of support for the speaker’s assertion.

<sup>133</sup> Ricky’s quieter, low pitched °↓stupidity° is characteristic of intimate talk in which self-disclosure occurs (Pritchard 1993:67). Pritchard’s (1993) study examines the linguistic and paralinguistic devices used by women who have survived rape to achieve ‘affiliation’ in their talk with each other about their experiences. The successful use of these devices affects the women’s self-disclosure that is crucial in overcoming their trauma. While the WOC women may not have suffered such trauma, the use of such devices in the interviews may lead to greater intimacy and, thus, greater self-disclosure in answers to questions from the interviewer. It may be that these devices are also used in talk about sensitive issues. See also Jefferson’s (1984c) work on laughter in troubles talk and Lavin and Maynard’s (2002) work on the way interviewers handle laughter in telephone surveys.

<sup>134</sup> Refer to the discussion of formulations in interviews in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.3. Heritage and Watson (1979:149ff) show that formulations are common in this kind of situation, because they have three components: deletion, preservation and transformation. At the same time as checking understanding, a formulation allows a speaker to transform what is said into something else without totally losing the thread to the original.

and ‘a big accident’. To translate this into ‘Unplanned, it just happened’ is perhaps not such a great leap; but the force and negative judgment in Ricky’s own description is not present in the way the pre-determined response option is phrased.

Ricky’s answer is followed by laughter. In the WOC interviews laughter usually occurs as a response to laughter by the respondent, with the interviewer joining in the respondent’s laughter, or as a response to something said by the respondent. Laughter is rarely initiated by the interviewer. This is characteristic of many of the interviews (see Chapter 3). This segment of the interview with Ricky illustrates features that also occur frequently in other interviews: pauses and long delays in responding, laughter, formulations by the interviewer, not getting an answer that translates to an appropriate response option, and problems in obtaining the correct number of responses. These are illustrated further by examples from other interviews in the course of examining how responses were negotiated.

Only one respondent, Annegret, gave an answer that used one of the topic words of a response option:

#### Segment 6.2 Annegret (07, 11; 02, 07, 13)

63. Int: and what determined the timing of your first child?  
 64. (2.3)  
 65. Annegret: ↑u::mhhh (2.0) i- hh my um (.) career had >sort've<  
 66. reached a point where i felt (.) i could- (.) take a-  
 67. (.) break, i guess,  
 68. Int: ↓sure, so you felt established.  
 69. Annegret: a- an- and um (.) my husband was (.) finally ready.  
 70. huh huh huh huh [.hhh so, um yes (°sort of°),  
 71. Int: [oi:: see::,  
 72. Int: (so let's just see) (0.6) .hh there is one here which  
 73. says- i've got a whole list of (.) um possible (.) um  
 74. reasons, and one of them is °convincing my partner it was  
 75. a good idea(h).°  
 76. Annegret: \$yeah hh yeah that's one of them\$ huh huh huh  
 77. [huh hhh  
 78. Int: [\$o(h)k(h)ay uhm i don't want to put words in your  
 79. mouth,\$  
 80. Annegret: huh huh [.hhh hhh]  
 81. Int: [oka:y ] and was it also that your  
 82. relationship was established and (.) you felt like  
 83. (.)°it was (.)it was time° to (just),  
 84. Annegret: ↑um .hhhh (1.0) o::h no:: >i mean< we- we've had a  
 85. (.) very long relationship, so i don't think that  
 86. sort of really came into [it=  
 87. Int: [right.  
 88. Annegret: =it was just a matter of (.) that we were both ready.  
 89. Int: .hhh (4.0) a::nd how many children ((next question))

[MMP#1:63–89]

The interaction with Annegret over Q167, in contrast to Q165, is one of the least troublesome for Annie. The interaction yields two responses quite quickly and with little probing. Although the question takes 14 turns to complete, this is mainly because Annie goes on (line 81ff) to probe, unnecessarily, for a third reason. On the interview schedule Annie circled three response options: (02) *Convincing my partner that it's a good idea*, (07) *Being established in my career*, and (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*.

Annie formulates Annegret's answer using the words of response option (07): '↓sure, so you felt established.' Annegret signals tacit agreement by moving on with no pause to provide a second reason: 'a- an- and um (.) my husband was (.) finally ready. huh huh huh huh ·hhh so, um yes (°sort of°),' The mention of her husband allows Annie the possibility of linking Annegret's answer with response option (2) *Convincing my partner that it's a good idea*. Annie then acknowledges her list of response options and mentions this option. Annegret laughingly agrees. Annie checks again and makes the point explicitly that she does not want to put words into Annegret's mouth. Using the words of a response option as a probe has proved a successful strategy for Annie; it has resulted in a speedy outcome. In the interaction so far the negotiation of two reasons has been relatively smooth. The negotiation of the third reason—not required for the survey—causes more trouble. In NLC Wave 1 the two response options recorded for Annegret were (07) *Being established in my career* and (11) *My relationship with my partner being well established*. Annie rejects response option (11) here (lines 84–6). Her answer in line 88 appears to be translated into response option (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*. This is not confirmed or rejected by Annegret.

In the face-to-face in-depth interview with Annegret on the day following the WOC survey interview, I asked Annegret about this question. Her reaction to the question was as follows:<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> For reasons of space and transcription time and because the in-depth interviews are a secondary source of data, the in-depth interviews have been 'roughly' transcribed; that is, CA symbols have not been used but the transcription is of the detail that would normally be included in qualitative research in any discipline (Briggs 1986:14). The focus is not on the interaction, though it is acknowledged that this is just as important in in-depth or unstructured interviews (Briggs 1986:21ff; Cicourel 1974; Mazeland and ten Have 1998); the purpose is to compare what the respondent says on two occasions. This transcription is limited compared with the detail revealed in a CA transcription.

**Annegret:** o yeah it probably was- it was just the way it was written. I mean the way the questions were posed were really leading questions in many ways anyway so then you ask a question that it's very hard to pick the answer and then you have to prompt the answers and then you know...

**Marian:** and the way you prompt can then-<sup>136</sup>

**Annegret:** yeah well that was that actually happened last night with the- or whenever it was that the girl rang me yesterday uhm why I chose to have a child and you know I just said something like uhm you know well basically we were ready for it so she was trying to prompt me to get- she obviously had some other things so she said 'oh was it- was it that you were you know- you were happy with your relationship?' and I thought why is she asking that? I said 'no actually as a matter of fact it had nothing to do with it' but you know you could just see that people- people would grab at that and say oh yeah that probably was the- you know- and you- if you were in a hurry or you didn't particularly want to be asked the questions or whatever you could easily end up with not quite the right answers to some of those things... I mean it's harder to do the analysis if you just have a- you know a blank- a blank line and say you just write what someone said but I think you actually end up with lots more valid results when you're codifying something like that... you get more

**Later...**

**Marian:** so like there was that question about having a first child and like how did that come about what determined it and you were saying before that you that you'd decided like you were going to have your family very soon straight away

**Annegret:** yeah well we- we- i mean- we'd been married for a long time and uhm i mean- we'd always intended to have children it was like just a question of sort of being ready to have children uhm and we sort of said oh yeah but one day you know

**Marian:** yeah

**Annegret:** anyway eventually we agreed that it was about the right time and uhm i'd been off the pill about six months and so then practically the first thing i actually got pregnant so it was it was sort of uhm it was just a good time in in my career to uhm take the time and Brian<sup>137</sup> was- knew it'd be a lot of hard work and we were realistic about that but but like we'd been saying afterwards we wanted to be sure that it was such a big step to the extent that she was born in the mid-semester break so that he could take time off

**Marian:** ((laughing)) that's good timing

**Annegret:** we're just lucky we got pregnant shh honey ((to child)) if you keep talking to me it'll take even longer to get to Ros's yeah so that was just really lucky you know we were able to get pregnant and take time off to have lectures and stuff to be at home for a week it's funny i mean probably the second time I know I think he would just basically say oh it doesn't matter when it happens I'll do it anyway but uhm the first time although you know it's gonna be- like I want to work but you still don't know until it actually happens without thinking about what that means in terms of parenthood and all of that- all the emotional thing that goes with it yeah so

---

<sup>136</sup> The type of probe also affects interaction in in-depth interviews. However, this topic is not pursued in this research.

<sup>137</sup> 'Brian' is a pseudonym.

Annegret's information above highlights the way in which one respondent perceives a field-coded question. When describing her reaction to Annie's probe that used the words of the response option, she says, 'I thought why is she asking that?'. Her longer answer here touches on all the responses obtained in both surveys. Annegret's interview is unusual in this.

In all WOC interviews except Annegret's Annie had to do more work to interpret the respondent's 'unformatted' first answer and format it in terms of a response option. In some cases this seemed, on the surface, a reasonable interpretation. For example, Coral's 'bad luck,' Karen's 'accident.', Jess and Sonya's 'fate' first answers were recorded as (04) *Unplanned, it just happened*. In three of these four cases, however, examining the interaction raises doubt that this might be an over-simplification, leading to a loss or distortion of information. Karen's interview went this way:

### Segment 6.3 Karen (04; 04, 11, 13)

78. Int: °°to stop pregnancy ( )°° a:::h what  
 79. determined the timing of your first child.  
 80. Karen: accident.  
 81. Int: accident.  
 82. Karen: ah hah hah hah [hah  
 83. Int: [was it actuall(h)y- hh was it a failure?  
 84. of contraception? or family planning method? or just  
 85. unplanned.  
 86. Karen: just unplanned actually, we'd been- we'd been- married  
 87. for five years, and we thought we'd try, and then we  
 88. tried and (.) nothing much happened so i started  
 89. studying and (.) blow me down my second study packages  
 90. arrived and i find i'm pregnant. [ah hah hah hah hah  
 91. Int: [o:::h.  
 92. Int: so you'd actually got to the point where you  
 93. felt right about it=>(sort of/things) you know< like-  
 94. you were established in your relationship and  
 95. [( )  
 96. Karen: [yeah. o::h definitely. [definitely.  
 97. Int: [yeah? well we'll put that down  
 98. too then. (0.6) u:m (1.3) t! (1.0) yep (.) ·hh ↑and ↑a:h  
 99. (.) i'm going to read out ((next question))

[MMPH#19:78-99]

Karen's 'accident.' is eventually reformatted and recorded as (04) *Unplanned, it just happened*, the only response option circled for this question. Annie probes, giving Karen a choice of three options, the first two of which did not apply: 'was it actuall(h)y- hh was it a failure? of contraception? or family planning method? or just unplanned.' (lines 83-5). The word 'unplanned' is used first by Annie and then confirmed by Karen. Karen's answer implies that the timing was unplanned but the birth itself was planned. Because it

is asked as a yes–no question, this probe is directive and suggestive to the respondent of how she should answer. For Annie it is a pragmatic solution to her difficulty of obtaining a response option that matches the list.

Karen’s story suggests far more detail and complexity than can possibly be captured by response option (04). Annie puts up a candidate answer (lines 92–5). This answer is formulated in terms of two response options, (11) and (13), and presented together as one yes–no question. Again, Annie has infringed the interviewer’s rule of probing only in a neutral way. This seems to have led to her circling options (11) *My relationship with my partner being well established* and (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*. Both these options give the impression that this was ‘determined’ timing, but neither came spontaneously from Karen. Karen signals definite agreement, however. The interaction here raises the question of what constitutes ‘planning’ when it comes to the timing of a birth. Is it ‘unplanned’ when Karen becomes pregnant at this stage, having wanted to become pregnant in the past? As will be apparent from other interview segments analysed in this chapter, the ambiguity of the phrase ‘timing of your first child’ means that sometimes the question could be interpreted as referring to the timing of the conception of the child and sometimes to the timing of ‘having’ a child or continuing the pregnancy.<sup>138</sup> It is hard to see what conclusions could be drawn from these responses without the benefit of Karen’s story.

For Sonya, with four children in 1998, options (04) and (05) were circled:

#### Segment 6.4 Sonya (04; 04, 05)

103. a:nd (.) a:h ↑what determined the timing of your first  
 104. child.  
 105. (1.6)  
 106. Sonya: ↑u:m fateɿ  
 107. Int: (° °)  
 108. Sonya: hah hhh [yeah]  
 109. Int: [u:m ] was it er- a failure of contraception.  
 110. or )  
 111. Sonya: ↑u:m (2.0) ↑no:: ↑it ↑wasn't. ↑no.  
 112. Int: (°just unplanned °)

<sup>138</sup> This assumes that termination was a choice for these women. Young and Ware (1978:8–9), reporting results from the 1977 *Melbourne Survey*, note that ‘4 per cent of women in the follow-up and recently married groups have had an abortion, and another one-third of the follow-up sample and one-quarter of the recently married sample would possibly consider it—for reasons largely related to not wanting any more children. An additional one-third from each sample could imagine having an abortion in extreme circumstances—generally for reasons such as medical indications in the mother or the baby’.

113. Sonya: yep- i- ↑yeah. i- i've- ↓yeah.=i've had lots of  
 114. problems=i've fallen pregnant on the pill and they've  
 115. (.) given me stronger ones and it doesn't work for me.  
 116. yeah. oh well.=  
 117. Int: =but this time it was just unplanned (°it was just-°  
 118. Sonya: yeah it was unplanned. i was on contraception. (but) it  
 119. failed.  
 120. Int: (°right°)  
 121. Sonya: yep  
 122. Int: (° 8.0 °)  
 123. Sonya: we only planned one child.  
 124. Int: °right.° (one child)  
 125. Sonya: yep  
 126. Int: ↑now i'm going to read out ((next question))

[MMPH#7:103-26]

If, like Sonya, a respondent gives a first answer that implies no control or external control of timing, Annie records (04) on the interview schedule. She usually then follows up with a yes-no question, based on (05) *Failure of contraception/family planning method*, asking directly whether it was a failure of contraception or family planning method, rather than using the instruction on the interview schedule *Any other reasons?* as a prompt. Without a directive probe, would Sonya have come up with response option (05) herself? At one point in the interview (line 111) Sonya says repeatedly, after some thought, that it was not a failure of contraception: '↑u:m (2.0) ↑no:: ↑it ↑wasn't. ↑no.' After further checking from Annie, however, Sonya says emphatically, 'yeah it was unplanned. i was on contraception. (but) it failed.' The impression is that there is more to this story than meets the eye; perhaps if the interaction had proceeded differently different response options could have been recorded. Options (04) and (05) are logically related and may reflect what occurs during this interaction, but how accurately do they represent Sonya's situation?

Annie recorded (04) *Unplanned, it just happened* for the interview with Jess:

#### Segment 6.5 Jess (01, 14; 04)

63. Int: u::m (.) what determined the timing of your first child.  
 64. (0.6)  
 65. Jess: ·hh fate. ahHAH HAH HAH nHAH HUH HUH HUH ·hh hold on a  
 66. moment until we see if he's quiet or see if he  
 67. squeals=no=totally unexpected.  
 68. Int: and was it actually a failure of contraception or family  
 69. planning method?  
 70. (1.0)  
 71. Jess: o::hhh let's see::, let's see: ubwa wa wa wa (.) ·hh i  
 72. guess∂ yeah∂ hhh[hh ](h)  
 73. Int: [ ]  
 74. Jess: well actually no:: no:: [ ] not- no:: not at all. just=-

75. Int: [no. ]  
 76. Int: =it was just unplanned  
 77. Jess: °ye:ss. it was unplanned.°  
 78. Int: (° °)  
 79. Jess: MM HM yars  
 80. Int: ↑a::h ↑no::w ↑how many children ((next question))

[MMP#9:63–80]

Jess was asked a different variant of this question in the Wave 1 NLC interview as she had not yet had a child at that time. Her responses, then, might be expected to differ between the two surveys. The earlier responses for Jess were recorded as (01) *I have to get a partner first* and (14) *Feeling financially secure*. In the WOC interview Annie records only one response for Jess—(04) *Unplanned, it just happened*. She attempts to obtain a second by using a yes–no question, a directive probe based on response option (05) *Failure of contraception/family planning method*. At first Jess signals a dispreferred response with lengthened syllables, discourse markers, repetition and pauses, ending with rising intonation. This question is difficult for her. When questioned further by Annie’s ‘yes?’ she changes her mind: well actually no:: no:: not- no:: not at all. just-,’ again showing features of a dispreferred response. Annie finishes her sentence for her, providing her with a candidate answer: ‘it was just unplanned’. Jess confirms this: °ye:ss. it was unplanned.° and Annie moves on to the next question without trying for a second reason. Annie makes a decision based on Jess’s responses to her directive probes without knowing the situation Jess is recalling; Jess is answering Annie’s questions without knowing that some answers are acceptable as responses but not others.

The pattern in the interview with Jess resembles what occurs with Sonya and Karen (Segments 6.3, 6.4). Regardless of whether the recorded options reflect these women’s situations, Sonya’s, Karen’s and Jess’s first answers were fairly easily interpretable and able to be formatted in terms of one of the response options—(04) *Unplanned, it just happened*. Those of Carol and Tonia took more effort. Both respondents had (11) *My relationship with my partner being well established* recorded as an option, though it is impossible to tell in which order the options were circled.

Carol’s first answer was as follows:



Segment 6.6 Carol (11, 07; 07, 08, 09, 11, 14)

93. Int: ↑um (.) what determined the timing of your [first child.  
 94. Carol: [·hh  
 95. Carol: hh o::h hh um now, let's see. ·hh >what was that<  
 96. ↑↑well. um. (0.6) ·hh we'd been married fo::r hh ·hh hh  
 97. ↑well we'd been together f- ·hh now ha- >how long-  
 98. nineteen eighty three she was born and< ·hh so we'd been  
 99. together for about five yea::rs, we came back to  
 100. Australia, ·hh we (.) bought a hou:se, so- it- we sort  
 101. of seemed fairly settled, ·hh  
 102. Int: and ah was it also that your relationship was  
 103. established?  
 104. Carol: mm hm  
 105. Int: and financial considerations as well? [or you were=  
 106. Carol: [↑um  
 107. Int: =feeling right about [it ( )?  
 108. Carol: [·hh ↑well- financial  
 109. considerations hh ·hh were a concern,=like- i wouldn't  
 110. have done it before i had ·hh ah- we both had regular  
 111. permanent jobs.  
 112. Int: oh. i see. (° you were established in  
 113. your career [and=  
 114. Carol: [y-  
 115. Int: =your partner was estab[lished] in his career °)  
 116. Carol: [yeah ]  
 117. (2.3)  
 118. Int: ↑u::m (.) ↑a:nd (.) i'm going to read ((next question))

[MMPH#15:93-118]

Annie recorded five responses for Carol, although only two were required. In her first answer (lines 95–101) after a series of false starts, discourse markers and cues that indicate difficulty in answering immediately, Carol tells a story, summarising it herself with a formulation: 'so- it- we sort of seemed fairly settled, ·hh.' The frame of Carol's answer is in terms of the duration of their relationship and, together with the concept of 'settled', might be interpreted in terms of option (11) *My relationship with my partner being well established*. Carol's response is not exactly in terms of any response option, and Annie checks the appropriateness of her interpretation using a directive yes–no probe based on response option (11). If she does not use the words of the response option in her probe, there is no certainty that Carol will herself produce the exact wording of the option. Carol responds with an acknowledgment token, 'mm hm'.<sup>139</sup> Without using a formulation it is hard to see how Annie could control the flow of the interview in the direction of negotiating a response. Without the suggestion of a frame for her answer in such a formulation Carol's response could take even longer.

<sup>139</sup> For a full discussion of acknowledgment tokens see Chapter 3 Section 3.2.1.

In lines 105–7, Annie proposes two more candidate responses, using some of topic words of options (14) *Feeling financially secure* and (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*. The choice of these options seems arbitrary as nothing in the previous interaction seems to suggest them. Carol responds positively to (14) but does not address (13). The response (09) *Having enough money to buy a house* is circled on the basis of what Carol says in her first answer. Whether having enough money to buy a house determined the timing of her first child of itself is not clear from this interaction. The causal relationship is not transparent. Yes, they had enough money to buy a house, but whether this was a reason for the timing of the first child is unclear.

Options (07) *Being established in my career*, (08) *My partner being established in their career*, and (14) *Feeling financially secure* seem to be derived from lines 108–11, although what Carol says about financial considerations does not necessarily amount to feeling financially secure. Again, Annie is in the position of having to decide on options unknown to the respondent, supposedly without probing in a directive manner. Why did Annie choose (14) and (15) as probes? She could equally have used different response options as probes—(02), (10) or (12) for example—with different response options perhaps being circled on the interview schedule as a result.

Although five response options were recorded for Carol in the WOC Survey, NLC Wave 1 allowed for only two. Options (11) and (07) were recorded. This raises the question as to whether information was given but not recorded for this question in NLC Wave 1, thus resulting in unnecessary loss or distortion of information, or whether the interaction proceeded differently. The interaction between Carol and Annie also raises the issue of the order in which response options are mentioned and recorded. From the interaction between Carol and Annie in the WOC interview, several possibilities arise for ordering the responses eventually recorded. Option (09) could have been recorded first, as ‘house’ is the first topic word mentioned that coincides with the topic word of a response option. Jenny’s interview raises this question also (Segment 6.8). It is clear that response options were not necessarily produced in discrete parts of the interaction, but often formulated from fragments of talk throughout the interaction over the question.

The first answers of Andrea, Melinda, Lyn, Edith, Jenny, Noelle, and Kristen all resulted in the interviewer and respondent doing much more interactional work to negotiate the response options. Andrea gave age as an answer, an option not included in the list and

not interpretable in terms of any other option. Kristen gave being on fertility drugs as an answer. Noelle's and Lyn's answers (Segments 6.7 and 6.12 below) caused difficulty because they answered in terms of wanting a child:

**Segment 6.7 Noelle (13, 10; 11, 13)**

106. Int: what determined the timing of your first child.  
 107. Noelle: what did i- sorry?  
 108. Int: >sorry< what determined the timing of your first child.  
 109. (0.3)  
 110. Noelle: u:m (1.3) because (.) i wanted to.  
 111. Int: because you wanted to. ↑um so, was it that you felt it  
 112. was (0.3) the right time, (1.0) you felt right about  
 113. it,=  
 114. Noelle: =well, i planned to, (.) so,=  
 115. Int: =yes (°it was planned°)  
 116. Noelle: °yes°  
 117. Int: was it a:h to do with - >you know< you felt like a  
 118. change, or-  
 119. Noelle: ·hh o:::h. no::, i think probably just because (.) i was  
 120. getting a bit ↑o(h)(h)lder. hh  
 121. Int: ↑oh ↑i see,  
 122. Noelle: ↑yeah. a:nd (.) just- (.) simply because ↑yeah.=we (.)  
 123. decided that that was what we both wanted, and (.)  
 124. didn't want to wait any longer, so,  
 125. (7.0) ((interviewer's voice also very quiet here))  
 126. Int: ( relationship well  
 127. established  
 128. Noelle: ( )  
 129. Int: ↑and ↑a::h ↑now i'm going to read ((next question))

[MMPH#14:105–28]

Noelle answers the question with her reason: 'u:m (1.3) because (.) i wanted to.' As with many of the other interviews, her answer does not help Annie circle a response option. Annie formulates a candidate answer using '↑um so, was it that you felt it was (0.3) the right time, (1.0) you felt right about it,' some of the words of option (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*. This does not bring forth an allowable response, and Noelle comes up with another reason not on the list: 'well, i planned to, (.) so,'.<sup>140</sup> Annie tries again with a yes–no question using material that does not appear to be based on any listed response option: 'was it a:h to do with - >you know< you felt like a change, or-'. This does not produce a listed response option either; instead, Noelle gives the reason of her

<sup>140</sup> Schifffrin (1987:107) notes: 'When respondents do not take the ideational options offered by the form of a prior question... *well* is frequently used to mark the answer.' Pomerantz (1984a) notes that *well* prefaces disagreement, acting in the same way as *yes but* and silence, signalling responses that are in some way dispreferred. Lakoff (1973 cited in Schifffrin 1987:102) observes that *well* prefaces responses that are insufficient answers to questions. *Well* occurs more frequently after wh- than yes–no questions (Schifffrin 1987:104ff). See also the discussion of *well* and dispreferred responses in Chapter 3 Sections 3.2.5.

age: ‘hh o::h. no::, i think probably just because (.) i was getting a bit ↑o(h)(h)lder. hh.’ Then in lines 121–3 she tells Annie again her initial reason: ‘a:nd (.) just- (.) simply because ↑yeah.=we (.) decided that that was what we both wanted, and (.) didn’t want to wait any longer; so;’. Although the next two turns are not clear on the tape because of the noise of children, Annie uses the words ‘relationship well established’, words that appear in option (11). Noelle’s answer is not audible, but (11) is circled on the interview schedule.

Noelle’s interview is particularly interesting in the way that none of the reasons she produces match the response options. She persists in telling her own reasons in her own way. Neither of the recorded responses was initiated by Noelle. Annie wrote underneath the list of options: ‘was getting a bit older.’ For NLC Wave 1 Noelle’s response were (13) and (10).

Jenny’s first answer was as follows:

#### Segment 6.8 Jenny (13; 08, 10, 11, 13, 14)

93. Int: ( ) what determined the timing of your first  
 94. child.  
 95. Jenny: a::h (2.0) an agreement that we would start a f- start a  
 96. family.  
 97. Int: so was it that you ( )  
 98. Jenny: ↑um (0.3) ↑well=we had married=i hadn’t worked  
 99. °fulltime° for about four years, and i decided i ( )  
 100. but (0.3) (my husband/like i) was twenty six then, so  
 101. yea::h.= (it seemed the time was right) (1.3) time was  
 102. getting on? (um wait any longer.)  
 103. Int: ( there are) a whole lot of options  
 104. (here)=one of them is ( relationship)  
 105. Jenny: ↑yeah.

[MMPH#23:93–105]

Jenny and Annie took 25 turns to complete the question, with five reasons being circled. Only the first part of the interaction is reproduced here. Jenny’s first answer is not acceptable to Annie, who then asks her a yes–no question. Like Noelle, Jenny prefaces her next answer with ‘↑well’, indicating a dispreferred response that does not sufficiently answer the question (inaudible) (line 97). Annie reverts to being open about the list of options in front of her on the interview schedule and outlines ‘one of them’. This achieves a result in terms of the option that Annie suggests—(11) *My relationship with my partner being well established*.

The way Annie deals with Edith's first answer is different again:

**Segment 6.9 Edith (05; 04, 05, 13)**

124. Int: °okay.° ↑now ↑what detim- what determined (.) the timing  
 125. of your first child.  
 126. Edith: a::h (1.3) what determined?  
 127. Int: mm. what- was it- you know- you- you were just newly  
 128. married and wanted to have a child as soon as possible  
 129. ( )  
 130. Edith: no no not at all.  
 131. Int: (°it was unplanned°)  
 132. Edith: ↑yea:h. it was.=[i was on the pill.  
 133. Int: [hah hah  
 134. Int: oh. ri::ght.  
 135. Edith: ↑yeah. (1.0) and the second one i had an IUD.  
 136. Int: oh. right.  
 137. Edith: °°yeah°°  
 138. Int: AND AH- SO (.) but obviously you were (.) in a  
 139. relationship where (you would [have ] received a lot=  
 140. Edith: [°yeah.]  
 141. Int: =of support.)  
 142. Edith: °yeah. yeah.°  
 143. (1.3)  
 144. Int: ↑now ↑a::h- i'm going to read you ((next question))

[MMPH#17:124–44]

When Edith indicates trouble with the question, instead of repeating what was written on the interview schedule, Annie abandons the question. This breaches rules for interviewer behaviour.<sup>141</sup> She asks instead a yes–no question, formatted in terms of response option (06) *Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage*. When this is rejected, Annie puts up an apparently arbitrary candidate answer based on response option (4): '(°it was unplanned°)'. Her laughter when this was emphatically accepted by Edith was a laugh of surprise, perhaps because she had guessed correctly. Edith equates 'unplanned' with 'failure of contraception' here. Later (line 138) Annie's use of 'obviously' and her directive probing statement make it very difficult for Edith to decline Annie's formulation of her situation.<sup>142</sup> Annie circles option (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it* for this interview, when there appears to be no evidence for this in what Edith says; in fact, (11) *My relationship with my partner being well established* might have been a closer interpretation, based on the participants' interaction.

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, Suchman and Jordan (1990a:233f). Houtkoop-Steenstra (1997a:613) and Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki (1997:295) note that this is frequent interviewer behaviour.

<sup>142</sup> Houtkoop-Steenstra (1997:299) found that declarative questions such as this have the same effect as leading or directive questions. They are used when speakers have good reason to believe the proposition to be a fact; that is, when they already believe that they have the answer.

Does yeah (particularly °yeah°) always mean ‘yes’? Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:121–7) gives many examples of respondent acquiescence, noting: ‘The standardized survey interview is typically a social interaction in which the respondents readily agree with the interviewers’ statements, even though they may not be (quite) correct.’ Molenaar and Smit (1996) show that respondents usually give agreeing answers to ‘one-sided positive yes–no questions’, a strategy in ‘normal’ conversation’. In her study of the interactional function of soft talk in research interviews Houtkoop-Steenstra (1997b:3,5) notes that the use of low volume is associated with passivity: ‘Conversationalists use low volume to indicate that they are not ready to take the turn, or to indicate their preparedness to give up the turn’. It appears that often the respondent, like Edith, is going along with what the interviewer is saying as a response to a formulation. To say ‘no’, a respondent must do more interactional work, particularly when her decision is to reject the interviewer’s formulation. As mentioned in Chapter 3, it is much harder to disagree than to agree with a formulation. This is particularly so if the formulation is not inaccurate. However, without knowing the response options, the respondent is not in a position to agree to the ‘best fit’ among all response options. Here, Edith seems to assent to Annie’s understanding.

A respondent puts an interaction in jeopardy by ‘disconfirming’ an interviewer’s formulation (Heritage and Watson 1979:136–53), hence putting the sense of the interaction so far back to ‘square one’.<sup>143</sup> Molenaar and Smit (1996:133–4) found that, since ‘both the interviewer and the respondent care about their relationship,’ some contributions may reflect ‘an act of politeness rather than a sincere opinion’. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Houtkoop-Steenstra (1996:216–9) notes, on the basis of Dutch interviews, that ‘yes’ (*ja*) often may not mean ‘yes’, but, rather, be acquiescence in the face of difficulties in addressing the frame of the question.

Kristen’s WOC interview produced none of the listed response options. In NLC Wave 1 (06) *Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage* and (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it were recorded*. Annie wrote underneath the list: ‘trying c. fertility drugs.’ This segment is an example of what happens when Annie does not use formulation based on the response options to obtain a response:

---

<sup>143</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Heritage and Watson (1979), Pomerantz (1984a) and Sacks (1987).

131. Int:           ↑u:m and what determined the timing of your first child.  
 132. Kristen:      pardon?  
 133. Int:           what determined the timing of your first child.  
 134. Kristen:      well i was on a fertility drug with my first one,  
 135. Int:           right. [were you- eventually-           ]  
 136. Kristen:      [because they said i couldn't-] yeah. cos they  
 137.               said i couldn't get pregnant.  
 138. Int:           ri:ght. (0.3) ↑so you were actually trying.  
 139. Kristen:      yeah. i was actually trying. yeah. but there was  
 140.               something wrong with him too=he had a low sperm count.  
 141.               ·hh  
 142. Int:           °ri:ght°.  
 143. Kristen:      so:: i think there was a bit of a problem with both of  
 144.               us, and (.) ·hh then i fell pregnant with Ben and then  
 145.               (.) Patricia:, hh it was just automatic,  
 146.               [it was really ↑good,]  
 147. Int:           [oh r i: g h t           ] right=  
 148. Kristen:      =so it was good. i m- wasn't on the fertility drug with  
 149.               her,  
 150. Int:           °ri:ght°=  
 151. Kristen:      =so that was good.  
 152. Int:           (°right°) ↑u:m [and when-  
 153. Kristen:      [  ] a bit of a surPRISE \$actually\$  
 154.               [hh HA HA HA ] ·hh \$yea::h\$.  
 155. Int:           [°yea::hheh heh°]  
 156. Int:                               so the next question is, ((next question))

[MMPH#6:131-56]

Kristen's interview is by far the longest of the WOC survey interviews. Kristen's strategies for keeping her turn are well developed, and as the interview progresses Annie yields more and more to Kristen's strategies. Kristen is able to keep her turn in this interaction (lines 136, 148, 151) and keeps talking, preventing Annie from taking a turn. Annie misses a chance in line 138, where she takes the opportunity to formulate a probe; however, because the probe is not in terms of one of the listed response options, Kristen's agreement does not yield an allowable response. She has another opportunity to take a turn at line 142, and produces a sequence-closing third, indicating a possible close to the sequence. Annie's use of 'right' here (lines 142, 147, 150, 152) acknowledges Kristen's answers, but since she still has not obtained an allowable response, it might indicate that she is still trying to put the information together to fit a response option.<sup>144</sup> Kristen continues talking about her pregnancies. Annie makes a final attempt in line 152 to ask a question, but Kristen keeps talking and Annie gives way. After 19 turns no

<sup>144</sup> In interviews the response token, 'right,' seems to have a sense of 'putting the bits together', a recognition of something mentioned before, and then moving on (Gardner 1999). The entire interview with Kristen demonstrates the difficulty of making connections between what Kristen says and the demands of the questions.

response options are forthcoming from Kristen, and Annie ends the interaction on this question.

### Segment 6.11 Melinda (13, 06; 10, 13)

**[MMPH#16:79–95]**

The second option circled for Melinda was (10) *Feeling able to cope with the demands of a child*. Annie suggests this option to Melinda, referring to ‘one of them’. Annie seems to be referring to the list of response options and using the options themselves to probe for further reasons. As shown by other interviews, probing with the words of a response option in a formulation is an effective and economical way for the interviewer to encourage the respondent to format the answer so that the option can be circled without



delay (Heritage and Watson 1979). Melinda's interview is another example of the way in which this probing is arbitrary and suggestive, however. Not all response options are offered equally. The tendency of respondents to acquiesce also cannot be discounted (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:121–127; Molenaar and Smit 1996).

It is already obvious from segments of interviews cited so far in this chapter that, although the question is asked in a fairly similar way for each respondent, the way in which probing occurs is not standard. The validity of the research instrument is called into question, as, according to guidelines for standardised interviewing, interviewers should present all respondents with the same stimuli and probe in a neutral way (de Vaus 1995:115–6; Fowler and Mangione 1990:138; Frey and Oishi 1995:2; Gorden 1969:214–20; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995:91–2, 2000:2; Keats 2000:64ff; Macro International Inc. 1997a:14; Stewart and Cash 1991:Chapter 6).

Lyn's response is not formatted in terms of any of the response options on the questionnaire. The interaction between Lyn and Annie is shown below:

#### Segment 6.12 Lyn (04; 04, 05, 13)

96. Int: ·hh now what determined the timing of your first child.  
 97. (7.0)  
 98. Lyn: a:h i thi:nk (.) i just >wanted to have a child.<  
 99. Int: so you just decided that you felt (.) right about it (.) at the  
 100. ti:me, like ([°° °°)=  
 101. Lyn: [well hhh  
 102. Int: =(°° °°)  
 103. Lyn: the pregnancy was accidental, but °um° but yeah (.) (°i wanted  
 104. to have a child°)  
 105. Int: (°°okay°°) ↑um now do you mind me asking was it a failure of  
 106. contraceptive (behaviour?) (°° 3.0 °°)  
 107. Lyn: um hhh i wouldn't say it was a failure of- of contraceptives, i  
 108. (2.5) <i-i hhhad a (.) miscarriage> before i had Lewis. and  
 109. that pregnancy was completely (.) unplanned.  
 110. Int: ri:ght.  
 111. Lyn: a:nd (.) in the period after the miscarriage, (1.0)  
 112. >immediately after the miscarriage< (0.3) >°you know°<  
 113. contraception was interrupted. a:nd (.) i- i sh- i should have  
 114. wai:ted longer than i did, but (.) for some reason i just fell  
 115. pregnant very easily °afterwards.°  
 116. Int: (°°right.°°) (3.0) °oka:y¿° ↑u::m now i'm going to read out  
 117. ((next question))

[MMPH#2:96–117]

Annie first reformulates Lyn's answer as a yes–no question using the words of response option (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*: 'so you just decided that you felt (.) right about it (.) at the ti:me, like ...' Lyn's answer to this formulation was not 'yes' or 'no' but 'well',

an indication that she does not readily agree with Annie's formulation, but is actively considering, deliberating or sizing up the question.<sup>145</sup> Lyn goes on to say that although the pregnancy was accidental, she wanted to have a child, repeating her first answer to the question. This highlights a difficulty with the ambiguity of concepts contained in the question; a respondent might not feel 'right' about becoming pregnant but might feel 'right' about continuing the pregnancy to term. Again, timing can be unplanned even if a birth is planned. This is not reflected in the response options.

Lyn's concession to Annie's formulation—'so you just decided that you felt (.) right about it (.) at the time, like (°° °°).'<sup>146</sup>—is in line with research that shows respondents are reluctant to disagree with interviewers and will often acquiesce or compromise on their responses in the interests of maintaining a harmonious relationship (Brown and Levinson 1987; Heritage and Watson 1979; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1996; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki 1997; Molenaar and Smit 1996). Lyn's answer poses a problem for Annie because it still does not fit any of the responses on the interview schedule.

Much of the detail and complexity of Lyn's answer is lost in the coded responses for this question. Annie circled (04), (05), (13) and (14),<sup>146</sup> and wrote in the margin, 'had a miscarriage & then in the next ~~period~~ cycle had a failed contraceptive method & got pregnant c. L.' The way in which Lyn talks about her experience is clumsily formatted into these response options. She explicitly states: 'um hhh i wouldn't say it was a failure of- of contraceptives?' (one of the options recorded by Annie). The way in which she talks about her experience does not fit the way the responses are conceptualised and categorised on the interview schedule. Annie does not prolong the interaction by asking further questions. Her responses are minimal, 'right.' with falling intonation (lines 110, 116); this seems to indicate that she is making connections with what Lyn said earlier (Gardner 1999). The impression Annie's response gives is that this is too difficult to deal with further and that she has enough information without responding to the complexity of Lyn's reasons.

---

<sup>145</sup> This is Schourup's (2001) interpretation of 'well'.

<sup>146</sup> (04) *Unplanned, it just happened*; (05) *Failure of contraception/family planning method*; (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*; (14) *Feeling financially secure*.

The most complex interaction in terms of the numbers of turns Annie and the respondent take to negotiate an answer occurs in the interview with Dale (Segment 6.13). This interview brings together many of the interactional features occurring for this question illustrated in the examples above (Segments 6.1–12):

### Segment 6.13 Dale (10, 08; 10, 13, 14)

77. Int: °oka:y° so ↑what will determine when or if you have um t! (0.6)  
 78. °a child° >oh hold on no< [what determined the timing of your=  
 79. Dale: [no  
 80. Int: = first child=°that's the first question°  
 81. Dale: ↑u::m (1.3) o:h. (1.0) probly:: age factor i'd say¿  
 82. Int: your- your age? [(you mean)] so u:m (.) was that a:h=  
 83. Dale: [yeah yeah ]  
 84. Int: =that you felt (.) that you were getting (.) to the point at  
 85. which you wanted to make a decision before you got too old?  
 86. Dale: yes. you know, like i didn't want to be too old to enjoy her  
 87. hah hah hah  
 88. Int: yeah.  
 89. Dale: ↑yeah.  
 90. Int: (so °° °° ((baby noises)) and (.)  
 91. were there also considerations about u:m wanting a child as  
 92. soon as possible after you were married? ( )  
 93. Dale: ↑a::h ↑oh ↑no not really, we <sort of> (.) u:m (1.3) oh i guess  
 94. probly a few friends (.) 'n family and that started having  
 95. them, and we thought oh we: h we liked being around them so  
 96. maybe it's about time we(h)e(h): [(.) ·hh] thought about=  
 97. Int: [right ]  
 98. Dale: =having one of our own¿  
 99. Int: °okay° so felt able to (.) cope with the demands of a chi[l]d?  
 100. Dale: [yeah.  
 101. yes i think so,  
 102. Int: and also:: u:m felt right about it=[that-] these are just=  
 103. Dale: [mm hm]  
 104. Int: =different options that (° °°  
 105. (u:m) ↑were finances a consideration at all? ( )  
 106. Dale: ↑u::m (1.3) ↑o:h (2.0) ↑no ↑not rea:lly, we're like um t! (0.6)  
 107. well (.) i mean i'm- i'm on- (.) on maternity leave for twelve  
 108. mo:nts, so we had to sort of make sure that we could afford  
 109. that¿ u::m  
 110. Int: before you deci[ded].  
 111. Dale: [before we decided¿ so  
 112. Int: so financial security was [(a consideration)  
 113. Dale: [yeah i'd say financial security  
 114. yeah.  
 115. (2.0)  
 116. Int: ↑u:m (.) a:nd ↑how many children ((next question))

[MMPH#8:77–116]

Annie circled three response options as a result of this interaction: (10) *Feeling able to cope with the demands of a child*, (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*, and (14) *Feeling financially secure*. Underneath the response options she wrote: 'age was a factor didn't want to be too old. Friends had kids & we liked hanging around them so we decided to have one

too'. In the NLC interview less than two years before, the responses recorded for Dale were (10) and (8) as first and second reasons, respectively.

Annie's first task is to ascertain which variant of the question to ask. As mentioned before, this was made more difficult without the prompts provided by the CATI system. Dale's 'no' (line 79) mirrors Annie's and seems to indicate that Dale, too, hears this as an inappropriate question for her. She thinks for some time before coming out with her answer: '↑u:::m (1.3) o:h. (1.0) probly:: age factor i'd say?'. This answer is not one of the responses that Annie has before her.<sup>147</sup> She reformulates Dale's answer but in different terms again from any of the response options. Thus, she is no closer to a response after two attempts, but her reformulation is met with approval from Dale, followed by laughter: 'yes. you know, like i didn't want to be too old to enjoy her hah hah hah.'

No material from Dale's previous response on age suggests a logical next topic or question to ask as far as the allowable response options are concerned (lines 86–7). Annie asks a yes–no question framed in terms of response option (06), providing Dale with a candidate answer: 'and (.) were there also considerations about u:m wanting a child as soon as possible after you were married?' (line 90). She converts the response option material into a yes–no question that can be asked as a seemingly natural part of the conversation, rather than sounding like one of a list of possible responses in front of her.<sup>148</sup> Looking at the list of response options, the choice of (06) as the first candidate answer seems arbitrary. If Annie were looking for a new topic to provide a second reason, having not succeeded with 'age' as a reason allowed on the questionnaire, she could have asked about any of a number of others on the list: (02), (07)–(09), or (11)–(14). If she were working systematically down the list, she might have been expected to ask about response option (02) in this way.

---

<sup>147</sup> The fact that 'age' comes up quite frequently as a first answer suggests that it could usefully be included in the list of response options. However, its appearance as a first answer may not be transparent to the survey designer if the interviewer then goes on to record two allowable responses.

<sup>148</sup> Heritage and Watson (1979:152) Molenaar and Smit (1996) and Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:Chapter 4) note this phenomenon. As mentioned in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, it seems that interviewers often abandon the rules of standardised survey interviewing and follow the principles of ordinary conversation to manage the interaction. Respondents sometimes become confused when interviewers adhere strictly to standardised interviewing procedures and appear to be incompetent conversationalists (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:69–85).

The WOC interviewer is given wording for prompting for a second reason (*Any other reason?*), and in a standardised survey interview it might be expected that she would use this wording. However, this arbitrary use of specific response options reframed as yes–no questions is noted in previous research as being a very common strategy for interviewers faced with field-coded questions (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:Ch.6; Smit 1995; Smit *et al.* 1997). Interviewers are caught between the demands of maintaining a normal conversation, not revealing to the respondent that the options for answering this question are limited in any way, and yet obtaining allowable responses to the question to record on the questionnaire. If the respondent were to be allowed to continue to choose her own topic throughout the interaction on a field-coded question such as this, the interaction might proceed for a very long time before an allowable response came up naturally in the conversation. Asking a yes–no question is a pragmatic way for the interviewer to deal with these irreconcilable demands, but, as noted by Fowler and Mangione (1990:40–1), a probe that can be answered by ‘yes’ or ‘no’ is directive.

In any case, Dale rejects Annie’s candidate answer as a possible reason (line 93). She then gives her own reason: ‘we <sort of> (.) u:m (1.3) oh i guess probly a few friends (.) ’n family and that started having them, and we thought oh we: ‘h we liked being around them so maybe it’s about time we(h)e(h): (.) ‘hh thought about having one of our own?’ Annie uses a formulation here, phrased as a yes–no question in the words of response option (10): ‘°okay° so felt able to (.) cope with the demands of a child?’ The omission of ‘you’, as would be expected in addressing someone in conversational interaction underlines that this comes from the response option. Dale’s answer ‘yeah. yes i think so,’ is not convincing agreement; the final rising intonation leaves it unfinished. Annie moves on without a pause to give another formulation candidate answer using some of the words of response option (13) (line 102). This time she openly acknowledges that there are options for the responses, but the use of ‘just’ minimises what follows:<sup>149</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> ‘Just’ is a contextualisation cue, providing an interpretive framework for what follows (Gumperz 1982; Schiffrin 1987). It appears to downgrade or minimise the following talk.

Segment 6.14 Dale (10, 08; 10, 13, 14)

102. Int: and also:: u:m felt right about it=[that- these are just=  
 103. Dale: [mm hm  
 104. Int: =different options that (° °)  
 105. (u:m) ↑were finances a consideration at all? ( )

[MMPh#8:102-5]

Dale responds to Annie's statement (no longer a question) with an acknowledgement token, 'mm hm'. Annie seems to have taken this as agreement, as she circled (13) on the questionnaire. Even though she already seems to have two reasons, she asks another yes-no question, this time using 'finances' as a topic, also the topic of response option (14). The way Annie asks this question sounds very much like the kind of question someone would casually ask in conversation (Molenaar and Smit 1996). Dale replies that finances were not really a consideration, but comes around to agreeing that financial security was a consideration (lines 113): 'yeah i'd say financial security yeah.' This agreement is convincing because 'yeah' is repeated with falling (final) intonation. What prompted Dale to see 'finances' and 'financial security' as different would not be evident without further information. Had Annie not reformulated the question from 'finances' to 'financial security', she might not have circled (14) *Feeling financially secure* as a response option. It is unclear what would have happened had Annie asked instead about another of the response options not already covered, such as (2) *Convincing my partner that it's a good idea*, (7) *Being established in my career*, (09) *Having enough money to buy a house*, (11) *My relationship with my partner being well established*, or (12) *After having enjoyed myself before settling down?* Maybe one of these options would have been circled instead. Again, the onlooker is left with the feeling that the process of confirming that particular response option was a result of the interactional processes occurring between Annie and Dale rather than a direct response to the question. This may go some way to explaining the response option (08) *My partner being established in their career* recorded for Dale's second response in the NLC Wave 1 interview. A different interviewer may also have probed differently.

Throughout this interaction Annie is clearly suggestive in her approach to probing and putting up candidate answers. Left to her own devices, would Dale have come up with the same reasons, and would she have circled the same response options? Would she have used the same words as the response options to describe her experience? If Dale

told her experience in her own words and her own way, it may be that none of the options recorded for the two survey interviews would figure in her story.

The interaction between Dale and Annie is the longest for this question; however, the issues raised about how the response options are negotiated are common to most of the interviews. These interviews with the women born after 1950 have shown the use of formulation, yes–no questions phrased in terms of response options, arbitrary selection of particular response options as candidate answers, and apparently arbitrary interpretation of the respondents’ answers in terms of the allowable response options for this question. How the interaction occurred between the interviewer and the second group of women, those born in or before 1950, is explored below.

**6.4.2     *WOC respondents born in or before 1950***

The responses to Q167 of WOC respondents born in or before 1950 demonstrate a number of features that distinguish them from the responses of the women born after 1950. Table 6.4 shows the year of birth, year of marriage, and age at first birth for these women.

**Table 6.4     Year of birth, year of first marriage and age at first birth, WOC respondents born in or before 1950**

Respondent	Year of birth	Year first married	Age at first birth
Beverly	1949	na	na
Chrissy	1950	1970	na
Debra	1950	1972	22
Helen	1950	1971	22
Joanne	1947	1968	23
Kerry	1942	1966	25
Lindy	1946	1968	29
Liz	1946	1972	33
Merilyn	1948	1967	20
Nadia	1943	1965	23

**Note:** na not applicable

**Source:** NLC 1997

The Office of the Status of Women (1999:119) summarises the demographic experience of the 1950 cohort, the cohort to which the older WOC women mostly belong:

A woman born in 1950 was likely to marry very young. The majority of these women were married by 21, but the proportion of their contemporaries who did not marry was beginning to increase. The trend toward increasingly universal marriage halted with women born in the early 1950s.

One in ten of her contemporaries would remain childless, and around one in ten (9%) would have only one child. She has a relatively small number of children (average number of births, at 2.3, is the same as the very low rate recorded for the 1905 birth cohort) and had her first child at around 24 years and her last at 29.

Even though only eight WOC respondents were born in or before 1950, their responses to Q167 seem to indicate that their first pregnancies were either accidental or that determining the timing was not an issue. Since modern methods of contraception, such as the pill and IUD, were not readily available in Australia until the early 1960s (Young and Ware 1978:4), the WOC women who were of reproductive age in the early 1960s may have had less knowledge of contraception than did women born later. They may also have had less access to modern and more effective contraception compared to younger women in the survey.

The 1971 *Melbourne Survey* (Caldwell *et al.* 1976) conducted semi-structured interviews with various groups of women. The newly married women interviewed were all married after the beginning of 1971, making them a little younger as a cohort than the WOC women born in or before 1950. Some of these interviews were carried out in Sydney (Campbell 1976) and Canberra (Cosford, Neill, Grocott, Caldwell *et al.* 1976), where some WOC respondents also lived. The semi-structured interviews document the marked attitudinal and behavioural changes that had occurred in the lives of many Australian women since the early 1960s as a result of a variety of forces. These forces included availability of the pill and IUD, abortion, and increasingly extended education for girls (Cosford *et al.* 1976:107). The most dramatic changes were changes within marriage, with 'a rapidly increasing agreement that children should not be born in the earlier years of marriage' (Cosford *et al.* 1976:112). The WOC women married by 1972 had presumably experienced some of these changes. However, most of the societal changes in marriage and delaying the first birth seem to have occurred just after this older group was married.



Richards (1978) respondents in Hawthorn, Melbourne, did not consider alternatives to having children: 'Parenthood, like marriage, was taken for granted' (Richards 1978:87). Being 'ready' and the 'right time' were also notions expressed by these respondents (Richards 1978:106, 126). Richards (1978:126) notes:

The two decisions—marrying and having the first child—were made, apparently, in much the same way. Since you were going to do both, the only important question was when.

The younger and older couples Richards interviewed also displayed a difference in attitude (Richards 1978:132).

Demographers have long sought a theory of fertility to account for variations and change in fertility (Carter 1995; McDaniel 1996:83). Carter (1995:55) argues that 'social science accounts of fertility change remain caught between the two poles they define'; that is, the two concepts of agency, one passive and one active, dominate the way that fertility change is conceptualised. However, as Carter (1995:84) concludes, it must be recognised that fertility change is a great deal more complex and hard to pin down. Locating decisions—if, in fact they are 'decisions'—in the way people behave, the 'flows of conduct involved in fertility' (Carter 1995:84) and understanding how these 'decisions' come about is a challenging task.

Fisher's (2000) study of birth control practice between about 1925 and 1950 among British women and couples challenges Coale's (1973:65) claim that for sustained decline in marital fertility to occur fertility must be within the calculus of conscious choice; that is, women and couples can only consciously choose to have fewer children if they perceive it to be a matter of choice. Fisher's interviews on determining the timing of births and family size show that 'a dichotomous portrayal in which past societies are presented as passive and fatalistic in their approach to family size while post-transitional societies are seen as inhabited by newly calculating individuals' is not appropriate. Rather, 'contraceptive decisions should not be conceived along polarized lines as either rational or irrational, discussed or unmentioned, calculated or random.' The tenor of Fisher's British interviews is similar to the way in which the WOC women answered questions on what determined the timing of their first births. Fisher's (2000:304) concept of 'non-decision' fits well with the way many of the WOC women talked about these

issues—not that they chose not to make a decision, but that they did not perceive that there was a decision to be made.

Four women, Kerry, Liz, Lindy and Nadia, were aged over 50 at the time of NLC Wave 1 in 1996–7 and were thus in their early to mid-teens in the early 1960s. Four women, Marilyn, Debra, Joanne and Helen, were born in the following five-year period. They would have been in their early teens in the early 1960s. All eight women were married between 1965 and 1972. The responses of these women in general indicate that they did not expect to have much control over the timing of their first births. This section considers the interaction over Q167 between Annie and seven of these eight women: Kerry, Liz, Nadia, Marilyn, Debra, Joanne, and Helen (the tape of Lindy's interview is too patchy to be presented here).

The responses of these women fall into two groups: those whose first births were reported as accidental (Nadia, Kerry and Debra) and those for whom determining timing did not appear to be an issue at all (Helen, Marilyn, Liz, and Joanne). Nadia and Kerry used 'accident' and 'accidental' to describe the timing of their first births. Debra used the phrase 'young and silly'. The response options did not cater for Lindy, who had taken eight years to become pregnant with her first child.

The interview with Nadia was the most straightforward, taking the minimum number of turns of all the WOC interviews to complete this question. Nadia, aged 55 at the time of the WOC interview in 1998, was married in 1965 and had her first child in 1966 when she was 23 years of age. Her responses were the same for both NLC Wave 1 and WOC—an unusual occurrence:

**Segment 6.15 Nadia (04; 04)**

81. Int: ↑UM (.) what determined the timing of your first child.  
82. (2.0)  
83. Nadia: accident.  
84. Int: °accident.° (1.0) was it a failure of contraceptives?  
85. (3.0)  
86. Nadia: no. not really. just (carelessness) huh huh  
87. Int: and (.) um (.) i'm going to read out some statements about  
88. children

[MMPH#21:81–88]

Although two rather long pauses of two and three seconds occur after Annie's direct questions, Nadia then gives her answers directly, with no hesitation, false starts, or indications of problems. The pauses may indicate that the answer itself is problematic—in a social sense—rather than the question. Annie probes using the wording of response option (05) *Failure of contraception, family planning method* and receives a clear negative answer followed by laughter: 'no. not really. just (carelessness) huh huh'. The nature of Nadia's response 'accident.' seems to make it redundant for Annie to probe for further reasons apart from the (05) option. All response options other than (05) involve planning or pre-meditation of some kind and appear to be contradictory to the concept of 'accident', or do not apply to those respondents, like Nadia, who are asked variant (c) of the question. On the interview schedule Annie circled (04) *Unplanned, it just happened*. She does not prompt for a second reason. In other interviews, however, Annie has probed for further reasons when she has obtained one response. Only seeking one reason, then, is the main reason for the shortness of this interaction (as with the interview with Ricky, also a short interaction).

Kerry was born in 1942, married in 1966, and also aged 55 when interviewed in the WOC survey in 1998. She had her first child in 1967 when she was 25. In Kerry's interview the interaction took 15 turns:

#### Segment 6.16 Kerry (04; 04, 06)

81. Int: ↑ah. ↑what determined the timing of your first child.  
82. Kerry: !t (.) o::h. accidental; hhhhhh hah [hah hah  
83. Int: [yes uh]h[m  
84. Kerry: [we were  
85. just married, °yeah°  
86. Int: a:h <did you actually-> so it was just that you were  
87. just married [and ] you wanted to have a child=  
88. Kerry: [°yeah°]  
89. Int: =[ ] as soon after marriage [( )  
90. Kerry: [(well)] [as- ↑well- i- er- i  
91. would've (.) preferred not to have one straight away,  
92. but we didn't take ah- (.) ah- what would you say um- t!  
93. Int: °precautions°=  
94. Kerry: =well. yes.  
95. Int: ahhhah  
96. Kerry: hah hah hhh i was going to say complete precau(h)tions  
97. [i ( )  
98. Int: [oh =right. so it wasn't a case of (° °)  
99. Kerry: no. °no.°  
100. Int: ( a:nd u:m)  
101. ((next question))

[MMPH#24:81-101]

The outcome of this interaction was (04) *Unplanned, it just happened* and (06) *Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage* being circled on the form, despite Kerry's rejection of (06) as an option applying to her (lines 90–2). Her false starts, hesitation, and use of 'well' indicate that she cannot accept all three propositions in Annie's formulation. She accepts the first proposition, saying 'yeah' after 'so it was just that you were just married', but her 'well' coming after 'and you wanted to have a child' is a strong indication that she cannot readily agree with the second proposition. Her response to the third proposition, 'as soon after marriage' is 'as- ↑well- i- er- i would've (.) preferred not to have one straight away, but we didn't take ah- (.) ah- what would you say um- t!'. This is again a dispreferred response, indicating that she cannot answer the question in the way in which it has been put. She also rejects Annie's 'precautions' as a completion of her answer, but what she then says to Annie is not completely audible on the tape. It appears that Annie was probably checking whether (05) *Failure of contraception/family planning method* applied. NLC Wave 1 and WOC coincided in recording (04) as one response.

Debra was aged 47 at the time of the WOC survey in 1998. She was born in 1950, married in 1972, and had four children, the first born when she was 22 years old. The interaction on Q167 in her interview was characterised by extended laughter:

#### Segment 6.17 Debra (04; 04, 05)

61. Int: a::::nd (.) what determined the timing of your first  
62. child.  
63. (1.3)  
64. Debra: u::m::m young and silly,  
65. Int: huh huh [huh  
66. Debra: [huh huh huh huh huh [huh  
67. Int: [(°°\$ [ °°  
68. Debra: [·hhhhh hah  
69. hah [hah hah ·hh  
70. Int: [↑and ↑a:r (.) \$does that mean (°it was°)  
71. <un[planned\$> or-  
72. Debra: [i- i-  
73. [i- i- it was very unplanned=it was five months=  
74. Int: [hhhh  
75. Debra: =after we were married.  
76. Int: °oh i see. okay.=so >we'll say unplanned.°< was it a  
77. failure of contraception or family planning method?  
78. (0.6)  
79. Debra: um- ↑family planning.  
80. (2.3)  
81. Int: a::::nd (4.0) t! t! (0.6) I'm going to ((next question))

[MMPH#27:61–81]

Debra's response 'u::m::m young and silly,' with rising intonation, elicits laughter as a response from Annie. A quite long interchange of laughter follows, with an inaudible comment from Annie that brings further laughter from Debra. Pritchard (1993:66) noted in her study of the talk of rape victims that laughter was a way for these women to affiliate with each other:

Troubles-recipients used laughter as an affiliative device, expressing support, solidarity, empathy and affiliation with the troubles-teller. Collective laughter acts as an expression of intimacy, trust, relaxation, relief, and mutual understanding of the topics of mirth. As an affiliative device, laughter acts as an endorsement of the troubles-teller and the troubles-talk. Collective laughter bonds or affiliates the women together, acting as a vehicle of tension relief and catharsis of intense emotion.

The troubles-teller responds to this affiliative support by further self-disclosing...

Here, Debra is not talking about the trauma of rape, but the 'trouble' of an unplanned pregnancy that may have been personally traumatic. Laughter between respondent and interviewer seems to be an important feature of the interaction on Q167, particularly where the pregnancy was accidental.

As expected from the interaction with Debra, Annie circled response options (04) *Unplanned, it just happened* and (05) *Failure of contraception/family planning method*. She also wrote 'young & silly' under the list of options. In probing for a second reason, Annie asks, '↑and ↑a:r (.) \$does that mean (°it was°) <un[planned\$> or-'. Throughout the interaction, 'it' refers to 'the timing of the first child'. Whether this is the timing of the pregnancy or the timing of the birth of this child is unclear. So we do not know from this interaction whether Debra's child was born five months after marriage or whether she became pregnant five months after marriage. Wave 1 NLC information shows that she was married in January 1972, and her first child was born in March 1973; thus, it seems that Debra took the question to mean the timing of becoming pregnant. The interpretation of the answers to this question might be clearer if the question had specified either 'timing of your first pregnancy' or 'timing of the birth of your first child'.

In the interview with Debra, Annie delivers her probe in the form of a double question, using the words of one of the response options for this question (lines 76–7). However, the question is ambiguous for the respondent. Rather than taking Annie's question as yes–no question, Debra takes it as an either/or question: 'Was it a failure of contraception or was it a failure of family planning (implying that contraception and

family planning are different). Note that this type of confusion also occurred in reverse with an earlier question in the survey (see Chapter 4); some respondents interpreted Q20 *Are you married or in a relationship?* as a yes–no question, whereas it was designed to be an either/or question. In response option (05) for Q167 on the questionnaire, the two phrases ‘contraception’ and ‘family planning method’ are grouped together as one response, *Failure of contraception/family planning method*. That is, the survey designers saw them as alternatives. This wording potentially contains two separate questions: ‘Was it a failure of contraception or was it a failure of family planning method?’ rather than the one question intended by the researchers. After a slight pause, Debra opts for ‘family planning’.

How did Debra perceive the difference between the two terms included in the questionnaire? Did other women also distinguish between the two terms? It may be that Debra saw contraception and family planning as two different things; family planning was condoned by the Catholic Church, for example, where contraception was not.<sup>150</sup> While the interruption to the interviews from such confusion is minor, resulting in only a short pause on Debra’s part, it seems that the question is ambiguous and may be interpreted in different ways by different respondents. NLC Wave 1 information showed Debra’s religion as ‘Catholic’.

As with the women born after 1950, the first answers of the women born before 1950 did not exactly match any response option. The over-riding impression from the interaction with five of these eight women—Helen, Marilyn, Liz, Lindy and Joanne—is that determining the timing of their first births was not a consideration. Excerpts from these interviews follow.

When interviewed for the WOC survey in 1998, Liz, aged 51, had two children, aged 12 and 18. Liz was born in 1946, married in 1972 and had her first child at 33 in 1980. What determined the timing of her first child remains unclear from the interaction, though Annie circled (04) *Unplanned, it just happened*, (13) *When I/we felt right about it* and (14)

---

<sup>150</sup> Young and Ware (1978:9), reporting on the results of the 1977 *Melbourne Survey* state: ‘Catholic women were more likely to use the church-approved method of rhythm, although a surprising number were using the pill, and, as might be expected, Catholic women were more opposed to abortion and sterilization.’ For an outline of the attitude of the Catholic church to control of family size, refer also to Freedman, Whelpton and Campbell (1959:415–8).

*Feeling financially secure.* Different responses were recorded for Liz in NLC Wave 1: (9) *Having enough money to buy a house* and (8) *My partner being established in their career.*

**Segment 6.18 Liz (09, 08; 04, 13, 14)**

63. Int: yihhh ·hh↑um (.) now what determined the timing of your  
64. first child.  
65. (0.6)  
66. Liz: ↓o::h (2.0) ·hh >i dunno< hh seven year itch? hhhh  
67. oh[hh  
68. Int: [seven year itch, hah [hah  
69. Liz: [no i don't think  
70. so=[ma]rried seven years but we had- u:m (.) i became=  
71. Int: [·hh]  
72. Liz: =pregnant. ·hhh i just think it was just one of those  
73. things that just sort of happened.  
74. Int: ri:ght. hh so it just happened, but <you were> in a  
75. relationship. [(so everything/you felt it/the timing)]=  
76. Liz: [oh yeah ]  
77. Int: =was right.  
78. Liz: oh yes. yes. yes.  
79. Int:m ( ) d- well you know  
80. financial security come into i::t, or (being [able)  
81. Liz: [oh yes.  
82. financial security did come into it ( )  
83. Int: and career as well=(was that) an is[sue  
84. Liz: [not rea::lly=no. i've  
85. never been a career minded per[son  
86. Int: [right. or your partner's  
87. career?  
88. Liz: a::h (.) no. he's a carpenter=it's not (.) like a- an  
89. issue of career, no. it was financial security [(·hh )  
90. Int: [(°right°)  
91. t! ↑um (.) now i'm going to read ((next question))

[MMPH#20:63–91]

After Liz's candidate answer joke about the pregnancy being the result of a seven-year itch, Liz retracts that answer and volunteers, 'no i don't think so=married seven years but we had- u:m (.) i became pregnant. ·hhh i just think it was just one of those things that just sort of happened.' Because 'it just happened' are some of the words in response option (04) *Unplanned, it just happened*, her answer at first seems a neat fit with option (04). However, the sense of 'unplanned'—the first part of (04)—does not fit what Liz says subsequently. The phrase 'married seven years but we had- u:m (.) i became pregnant' starts to tell a story that is not elaborated. Again, as in other interviews, Annie gives a formulation of Liz's answer (lines 74–6) that constitutes a check of her understanding of what Liz has said and suggests another response framed in terms of response option (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*. This is a formulation predicting a 'yes' response, which Liz gives. The formulation preserves part of what Liz said ('just happened'), deleted what Liz

said before that, and transformed her answer into response option (13).<sup>151</sup> Prompting with reasons that are based on response options means that at least the answers obtained are likely to fit the options on the interview schedule, but leaves doubt as to whether the respondent would have chosen that option in those terms. If she had been asked *Any other reason?* would she have responded with response option (13)?

However, Liz emphatically agrees that the time was right, ‘oh yes. yes. yes.’ and states that ‘it was financial security.’ The sequence—cause and effect—is not clear with option (13). Whether Liz felt right about it before or after she became pregnant is not clear; neither is it clear whether the response option can apply retrospectively; that is, in the case where the timing of the pregnancy was not ‘determined’. The words of response option (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it* imply a sequence of activity where feeling right occurs before the woman becomes pregnant or has her first child. For example, ‘When I felt right about it, I became pregnant,’ or ‘When I felt right about it, I decided to stop using contraception.’ To change the order of the sequence of activities, a word other than ‘when’ needs to be used; for example, ‘I felt right about it, so I became pregnant.’ Thus, response option (13) suggests a time frame and sequence that is at odds with the idea of something being ‘unplanned’. This time frame and sequence is not expressed by Liz herself. The fact that (04) *Unplanned, it just happened* was her first option implies that her feeling right about it could only have occurred afterwards. She and Annie are constrained by the format and expectations of the interview in exploring the story more fully. Annie is placed in an impossible position in making judgments about whether the response options apply to Liz.

Helen and Marilyn gave answers that suggested that determining the timing of their first child was not a question for them. Both women, after quite long pauses, said that nothing determined the timing. Helen, born in 1950 and married in 1971, had the first of her four children in 1972 when she was 22. The interaction over this question took 19 turns:

---

<sup>151</sup> Heritage and Watson (1979:130) show this preservation, deletion and transformation nature of



Segment 6.19 Helen (06, 04; 06)

144. Int: ↑now what determined the timing of your first child.  
 145. Helen: ↑u:m (1.6) nothin=we just got married and i fell  
 146. pregnant a month ↑later.  
 147. Int: so: (.) it was that you wanted a child as [soon] as=  
 148. Helen: [ye:s]  
 149. Int: =possible after marriage?  
 150. Helen: ↑ye:s.  
 151. Int: (°um did it have  
 152. anything to do with your partner being established in a  
 153. career ([ ] =  
 154. Helen: [na no.]  
 155. Int: = °) too (° °)  
 156. it's really just that sort of thing of wanting (°a child  
 157. as soon as [poss]ible after marriage °)  
 158. Helen: [yes ]  
 159. Helen: yes  
 160. Int: ( ) straight away  
 161. Helen: well as- oh well- see my husband's te- ah nine years  
 162. older than me, [so- ]  
 163. Int: [ri:ght.] °right.°  
 164. Helen: yeah.  
 165. Int: so (you wanted to [ ] that makes sense [ ])  
 166. Helen: [yeah ] [yeah ]  
 167. Int: ↑u:m ( ) now i'm going to read ((next question))

[MMPh#:144-167]

One response option (06) *Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage* was circled on the basis of this interaction. In Wave 1 NLC two responses were recorded for Helen, (06) and (04) *Unplanned, it just happened*. Helen's answer 'nothin=we just got married and i fell pregnant a month ↑later.' fits the second part of response option (04) ...*it just happened* but not the first part, *unplanned*. Helen's 'ye:s' at line 148 answers the first part of Annie's formulation 'so (.) it was that you wanted a child'. It does not relate to the issue of timing. It seems that planning was not an issue for her, rather than that the child was unplanned. Helen's response, '↑ye:s.' (line 150) is a definite response, with falling intonation, despite being lengthened.

The answer that 'nothing' determined the timing of the first child was Marilyn's answer also. Her interview suggests that controlling the timing was something not even considered. She was married in 1967, and her first child was born in 1968 when she was aged 20. She was 49 when interviewed in 1998. For her, marriage meant having children:

103. Int: what determined the timing of your first child.  
 104. (2.6)  
 105. Marilyn: °o:h° nothing really,  
 106. Int: no? was it um- (1.0) you know ah- deliberately planned  
 107. (accidental)  
 108. Marilyn: ↑oh we wer- we'd been- oh she was born just (.) twelve  
 109. months after we were ↑married  
 110. Int: ri:ght. so it was- that [you ] wanted a child as soon=  
 111. Marilyn: [yeah]  
 112. Int: =[as po]ssible after marria[ge  
 113. Marilyn: [↑yeah] [↑that was ↑it. there was-  
 114. ↓yeah >we were gonna have< CHILdren.  
 115. Int: >yeah< [huh huh  
 116. Marilyn: [yep hh  
 117. Int: ah (.) were there any considerations about >°you know°<  
 118. °having enough money to buy a hou:se, or feeling able to  
 119. cope with the demands of a child°,  
 120. Marilyn: no  
 121. Int: it was really just that thing [(°you know°] that) you=  
 122. Marilyn: [↑yeah ]  
 123. Int: =were married an[d so-  
 124. Marilyn: [you were married, and i- you have  
 125. ↑children.  
 126. Int: °yeah° (1.3) ↑ah now i'm going to ((next question))

[MMPH#13:103-126]

Like Helen, Marilyn's answer '°o:h° nothing really,' suggests that this was not an issue for her. The response option (06) *Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage* circled on Marilyn's interview schedule implies an active attitude to having children. Marilyn, however, is not saying that she wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage but that 'you were married, and i- you have ↑children.' Wanting did not come into it. This is also the impression of her words earlier in the interview (lines 113-4): '↑that was ↑it. there was- ↓yeah >we were gonna have< CHILdren.'

It might be more appropriate to say that, for Marilyn and Helen, marriage determined the timing of their first children. Annie, not Marilyn, introduces the idea that timing is deliberate when she first asks the question and then again when she implies that Marilyn wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage (lines 110, 112). This idea did not come from Marilyn herself, but she goes along with Annie's suggestions, as indicated by her answers in lines 113, 116, 122. It is by no means certain that Marilyn would have raised these issues if not prompted directly by Annie. In fact, the (06) response option could have become (01), (03), (08) or (13) if Annie had asked different questions at line 110. By probing with the words of one particular response option, Annie increases the likelihood of that option becoming the circled response.

Joanne was married in December 1968. She had four daughters. The first was born in 1970 when Joanne was 23. Her interaction with Annie over this question took 22 turns, the longest for the women born before 1950:

**Segment 6.21 Joanne (11; 13, 14)**

122. Int: ↑ah ↑now (.) what determined the timing of your first child.  
123. (1.3)  
124. Joanne: desi(h)re, i guess, (.) yeah,=  
125. Int: =what's that?  
126. Joanne: desire,  
127. Int: desi(h)(h)re?=  
128. Joanne: =yeah=wanting- (.) to have a child; [dyou mean?  
129. Int: [oh i see. (° °)  
130. Joanne: yeah,  
131. Int: so this was- um- as soon as- like- as soon as possible after  
132. marriage, or [when you] felt (things were) right  
133. Joanne: [↑oh no, ]  
134. Joanne: no, was two yea-, it was after- .hhh after we was- knew what  
135. we were doing and had a certain amount of stability,  
136. financial  
137. Int: sure.=  
138. Joanne: =↑yep  
139. Int: a:nd (.) obviously you felt right about it  
140. yourself[ves as well].  
141. Joanne: [ye:s, no problem, there,  
142. Int: and ah (.) there was nothing to do with you- like feeling  
143. able to cope with the demands of a child, or (.) that you  
144. were established in your relationship, or (your career was  
145. esta[blished ]  
146. Joanne: [i never even thought about=  
147. Int: =no=  
148. Joanne: =the career aspect. .hh i just thought (.) you had children  
149. and (.) you co(h)ped heh heh [heh  
150. Int: [yea(h)heh heh he[h .hh  
151. Joanne: [ .hh >never  
152. even entered my head you didn't co(h)pe< [heh heh heh .hh  
153. Int: [no:(h)hh ]  
154. .hh ↑now i'm going to ((next question))

[MMPH#10:122-54]

Joanne's first answer 'desi(h)re, i guess, (.) yeah,' is a surprise for Annie. She asks Joanne twice for confirmation. Joanne clarifies what she means: 'yeah=wanting- (.) to have a child<sub>2</sub>' and Annie moves on to formulate what Joanne has said (lines 131–2). She combines two response options, apparently arbitrarily, (06) *Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage* and (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it* as a basis for this summary: 'so this was- um- as soon as- like- as soon as possible after marriage, or [when you] felt (things were) right.' Joanne's answer indicates that she is addressing the first of these two when she says '↑oh no, no, was two yea-, it was after- ·hhh after we was- knew what we were doing and had a certain amount of stability, financial'. Annie circles (14) *Feeling financially*

*secure* as a listed option, though whether ‘a certain amount of stability, financial’ is equivalent to ‘feeling financially secure’ and whether ‘wanting to have a child’ is the same as ‘feeling right about it’ is debatable. In any case, ‘finance’ clearly is one relevant dimension for Joanne.<sup>152</sup>

Annie puts up (13) again as another formulation (line 139): ‘a:nd (.) obviously you felt right about it yourselves as well.’ Annie’s use of ‘obviously’ in a statement designed for confirmation predicts that Joanne will agree, implying, ‘isn’t it obvious to you and me that this is the case?’. Joanne agrees: ‘ye:s, no problem, there,’ providing Annie with a second response.

Although two responses seem to have been obtained at this point, Annie goes on to check that none of the other options applied to Joanne, phrasing her question as a negative statement assuming a negative answer. Joanne’s answer (lines 146–9) resembles Marilyn’s in the way that she accepted having children and coping: ‘i never even thought about the career aspect. ·hh i just thought (.) you had children and (.) you co(h)ped heh heh heh ·hh >never even entered my head you didn’t co(h)pe< heh heh heh ·hh’. To summarise Joanne’s answers as response options (13) and (14) results in a considerable loss of information.

The above interactions with women born before 1950 suggest that Q167 and the listed response options on the interview schedule do not reflect their situation. However, given that the main purpose of asking the fertility questions in the NLC Survey was to assess the decisions of younger women and what those decisions might mean for the future, the impact of the insights on older women might appear to be irrelevant. The fact that these women seemed to view ‘determining timing’ in terms of failing in their efforts to avoid a pregnancy, or not as an issue at all, is no longer as important in policy terms. The inappropriateness of the question and response options for these women made Annie’s task more problematic; in order to obtain two allowed response options, she needed to use strategies that directed the respondent to a response and that closed down the question–answer sequence as soon as possible. Otherwise, she would have had to rely on

---

<sup>152</sup> Financial security was an important issue for Australian women and couples of this age in considering when to marry (Caldwell *et al.* 1988a; Caldwell *et al.* 1976; Richards 1978).

the respondent herself to offer an allowed response option—a risky strategy in terms of time and achieving any response option at all (Heritage and Watson 1979:153).

The responses recorded for these women in the WOC survey were different from those recorded for NLC Wave 1 in four of the eight cases (Table 6.4). In most WOC interviews the response options circled seemed to be a result of the locally managed interaction that occurred. A great deal of potentially useful information is missing or lost in the process of negotiating through the obstacles imposed by the question itself and the unique situations of the women. Given the way that the interviewer probed in the above segments of interaction, it is conceivable that different interviewers faced with the same task might produce different response options, depending on which response options are chosen as probes. The interview data suggests that the differences in recorded responses between the two surveys may be more a matter of varying interviewer behaviour than varying stories from the women, though without transcription and analysis of the NLC Wave 1 interactions this interpretation cannot be confirmed.

### **6.5 Frequency of the combination of response options (04) and (05), and response options (13) and (15)**

Table 6.2 showed that response options (04) *Unplanned, it just happened* and (05) *Failure of contraception/family planning method* in combination were frequent and that (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it* and (15) *Other (specify)* were popular options. An examination of the interaction in the WOC interviews shows that this might not be the result of chance. Options (04) and (05) are a logical combination. For example, when a respondent mentioned in her answer anything that showed that she felt she had no control over the timing of her first child, Annie circled (04) *Unplanned, it just happened* and used a directive probe in the form of a yes–no question to ask whether (05) *Failure of contraception/family planning method* was the reason for this. This response option, then, was not spontaneously produced by the respondents themselves. Since only two reasons were to be recorded, none of the other possible reasons then needed to be asked. Because of the ambiguity about conception, pregnancy or giving birth contained in the question, other options could have been relevant but were not given equal chance of expression. The options (04) and (05), together with options (01)–(03) and (06), apply to conception



116. Tonia: [·hhh ] yes. [yeah everyth-] yeah it was=  
 117. Int: [( ]  
 118. Tonia: =planned.  
 119. Int: oka[y  
 120. Tonia: [°we [planned it.<°]  
 121. Int: [·hh a:nd (.)] in consideration of the- the  
 122. planning, like (.) was it that you >sort of< were (.)  
 123. established in the marriage, o:r  
 124. Tonia: yes.=  
 125. Int: =this was an extension of that  
 126. Tonia: yep  
 127. Int: °okay° ·hh u::m a: nd >you know< were there financial  
 128. considerations? or  
 129. Tonia: no. (0.6) no. it was more a- it was th- the state of the  
 130. relationship. and (.) we were ready for (.) children,  
 131. (0.3) yep.  
 132. Int: (°okay/right°) ·hh ↑u:m (1.3) and now i'm going to read  
 133. ((next question))

[MMPH#5:106–33]

Annie circled (11) *My relationship with my partner being well-established* and (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*. Early in the interaction (line 108) Tonia says, ‘hh (.) u- u:m (2.0) t! o:h. i don't know actually, um: (2.5) t! ah- it- we just felt it was the right thing to do.’ When Annie restates this as ‘thought it was the right time.’ Tonia rejects this reformulation in an ambivalent way: ‘hhh no i- hh but yea:h. (.) u:m-.’ She eventually accepts Annie’s ‘yeah. so it was planned.’ Even after Tonia’s restatement of her reasons in lines 129–31, response option (13) was circled.

When the framing of the question makes it difficult for Annie to pin a respondent down to any of the allowable options or when the respondent persists in not producing words that can be matched with any of the options on the list, option (13) is useful. Interaction in the interviews with the 12 women for whom this response was recorded illuminates the process by which the response was obtained.

The combination (04) *Unplanned, it just happened* and (13) *When I/we feel/felt right about it*—obtained for Edith, Karen, Liz and Lyn—appears to be contradictory (see discussion on Segment 6.18). It seems that the combination represents the situation where timing is neither planned nor unplanned: where women are neither trying to become pregnant nor trying to avoid pregnancy. However, an unplanned birth for these women seems not to be as potentially problematic as an accident. Lindy, who became pregnant after ‘trying for (.) nine years or something’, gave one word, ‘miracle’ in answer to Q167. Response option (13) was also an outcome of her interview, but it is difficult to see the connection between the two answers, given the cause and effect sequence of option (13). Without

further clarification from the respondents, these response options cannot be assumed to reflect how they saw their own situations.

To summarise, each response option reflects a variety of different respondent realities. The combination (04) and (05) covers a number of widely different respondent situations, some of which relate to contraceptive or family planning method failure. Concepts as disparate as ‘accident’, ‘bad luck’, ‘fate’, ‘miracle’, ‘seven-year itch’, ‘carelessness’, ‘don’t know’, and ‘young and silly’ are covered by (04) *Unplanned, it just happened*. Those for whom (06) *Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage* was recorded, Joanne, Marilyn and Helen, also report very different situations. The ‘catch-all’ category covered by response option (13) covers not only several of the other options in the list, but also concepts such as being ‘ready’ or wanting a child. In general, a single response option does not represent the same story. The prevalence of (15) *Other (specify)* also reflects the problems entailed in obtaining a match between the allowed response options and respondents’ answers. The WOC women’s first answers often appear as (15) *Other (specify)* responses. They do not match the listed responses and are therefore downgraded by being grouped together, especially since there are so many ‘Other’ responses.

## 6.6 Conclusion

Q167 is problematic since it calls on both interviewer and respondent to undertake a complex and awkward task of interpretation. First, the nature of the question itself poses a problem for some respondents. Does the phrase ‘timing of your first child’ mean conception, pregnancy, or giving birth? For those respondents asked Q167(b), *What determined the timing of this pregnancy?* the phrase is clearly defined as ‘this pregnancy’. However, Q167(a) *What will determine when or if you have your first child?* and Q167(c) *What determined the timing of your first child?* can be interpreted differently by different respondents. Q167 contains more than one concept: whether it asks about determining the timing of a birth or a pregnancy needs to be clear. Some response options—(01), (03) to (05)—seem to relate specifically to the timing of becoming pregnant, whereas others—(02), and (06) to (14)—relate more generally to the ongoing situation of having a child rather than being childless. Whether a pregnancy then leads to a birth is another



matter, possibly affected by different factors. To ask about these two kinds of timing at once can result in different understanding of the question for different respondents.

The interaction over Q167 and its response options brings up the issue of what constitutes 'planning' when it comes to the birth of a child? When is a child planned and when is it not? Q167 asks about reasons for *timing* not about what determined whether a woman had a child, in the sense of whether she planned to have a child. Planning could, however, cover timing also. These two issues become confused when response options relate to both these issues. Lyn's pregnancy was not premeditated at that *time* (an issue of timing) but this does not mean that the pregnancy was unplanned, that she planned not to have a child. Does 'planning' mean that a woman has to be consciously thinking, 'I want to have a child now'? In a general sense, women may not always consciously think, 'I want a child'. It may not always be a clear-cut issue.

To create a distinction between planned and unplanned births, then, may be a false dichotomy. 'Just ready' does not mean that the child is in fact 'planned' nor that the timing is determined. To what extent are women conscious of what determines timing? As demonstrated by the differences in the two groups of women, changes in attitudes to and prevalence of contraception and the place of children in their lives also may have some compounding effect on how consciously women consider determining the timing of their first birth. It seems that for some women marriage marks the moment when they are ready to have a child. For these women, any child born after marriage is not an accident, even if the timing is not planned. This notion is supported by interviews with women and couples on marriage and fertility change in Australia (Caldwell *et al.* 1988a; Caldwell *et al.* 1976; Richards 1978).

The interviews with the WOC respondents strongly support Fisher's (2000:304) finding for British couples that determining the timing of births was more complex than simply whether the birth was planned or unplanned, or whether contraception was used or not used. Fisher (2000:309) cautions also that it is easy to forget that, before many female-controlled methods of contraception were widely available, matters of timing of sexual intercourse and contraception were the responsibility of the man. A question that assumes that older women know what determined the birth of their first child may not be the best question to ask to obtain information about timing and family size.

The wording of Q167 implies that a woman knows what determined the timing of her first child and that the timing of a child can be determined or controlled. So when some women at first answered 'nothing' or 'I don't know,' 'fate,' 'bad luck,' or 'miracle,' implying that control or determination was not an issue at all, the achieved response outcomes that suggest an element of determination lead to doubt about how the response was obtained. Clark and Schober (1992:27–9) suggest that respondents make the 'interpretability presumption', that 'each question means what it is obvious to me here now that it means'. One of the 'surprising' consequences of this is that respondents use tacit reasoning to presume that 'when the surveyor asks me a question, he assumes it is one I can answer, one I have valid opinions about. So it must be about an issue I *do* have an opinion on'. Converse and Presser (1986:35) suggest that a 'no opinion' or, in the case of Q167, a 'don't know' option should be included.

To ask what determined the timing of the respondent's first child is probably a question more suited to qualitative research methods (Berg 1989:19; Briggs 1986:14ff; McCracken 1988:9,16–17; Oakley 1981; Weiss 1994:2–11). The question might have been better phrased more as women with children might ask the question of each other: 'Why did you have your first child when you did?' or 'What made you have children?'. However, without altering the constraints of the structured interview and its response options, no question on such an issue is likely to yield accurate data. This issue might better have been asked as an open question in an in-depth face-to-face interview.<sup>153</sup>

Because the question is field-coded, the task of the participants is even more demanding, as the interview interaction on this question in the WOC survey has shown. The 'state uncertainty' of some women is compounded by the 'task uncertainty' imposed by the question format (Schaeffer and Thomson 1992:38). The intention of the researcher in using a field-coded question may be to avoid influencing the woman's story before she gives an answer—a worthy motive for designing the question in such a way.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> Weiss (1994:13–4) comments on the difficulties in using the 'fixed question open response' solution in the hope that it will systematise collection of qualitative material and facilitate its quantitative treatment: 'Unfortunately, the fixed-question–open-response approach to data collection turns out to sacrifice as much in the quality of information as it gains in systematization. A very long response, just like a shorter one, will have to be fitted into code categories, and interviewers, aware of this, tend to limit the length of respondents' answers'.

<sup>154</sup> Schwarz and Hippler (1987:177) found, in collecting data on behavioural frequencies, that 'both the question and the response alternatives should be considered together'. They believe that researchers may

However, without the knowledge that the interviewer has a pre-determined list of options on the interview schedule, the respondent cannot easily co-operate in finding the most appropriate option for her situation. Foddy (1993:150) reports that respondents will attempt to answer what they can. The result is not that the women's stories come through uninfluenced, as shown by the segments from the WOC interviews, but rather that the responses, obtained collaboratively, seem a random and arbitrary representation of the women's 'true state'. As Cicourel (1974:143) argued, 'With fixed choice questions, the issue of the language used by the respondent is never raised'.

The interaction on Q167 confirms that directive probing was a widespread problem with this question, confirming other research on interaction in survey interviews (Dijkstra and van der Zouwen 1982; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 1996, 1997a, 2000; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki 1997; Molenaar and Smit 1996; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Smit 1995; Smit *et al.* 1997). This was also a finding for Q166 of the WOC Survey, also a field-coded question (Chapter 5). Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:5) notes that field-coded questions are likely to be even more problematic for interviews than open questions; this is because interviewers harm the validity of the final responses through the preference organisation of responses:

The preference organisation of responses, which causes respondents to agree easily, or seem to agree, with incorrect suggestions and reformulations, results in research data which [whose?] validity is doubtful (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1996:221).

Where categories of response options are also unclear or overlapping, the problems for interviewer and respondent are compounded.

The analysis in this chapter confirms earlier research suggesting that field-coded questions are problematic (Fowler and Mangione 1990:88–9; Smit 1995). Molenaar and Smit (1996:118) and Heritage and Watson (1984a:144), among others, point out the problems involved in a non-acceptance by the respondent of an interviewer's suggestion. Respondents tend to acquiesce rather than express disagreement because of the

---

be well advised to use open answer format to obtain such data. Pre-coding the alternatives may introduce systematic bias, as respondents gauge what is expected or typical behaviour from response options. In their study pre-coding a response scale rather than an open-answer format affected respondents' examples only when the range of the response alternatives deviated from the range of respondents' behavioural reports (Schwarz and Hippler 1987:174).

politeness principle in conversation (Brown and Levinson 1987) and the principle of co-operation (Grice 1989).

Acquiescence is a particular problem with yes–no questions used in probing (Foddy 1993:144). Houtkoop-Steentra (1997a:620) found that interviewers using a ‘personal interview style’ revised questions into yes–no questions to anticipate a ‘no-problem answer’, displaying an orientation to ‘the delicate and face threatening formulation of the scripted formulation’. She observes: ‘If survey methodology expects interviewers to read out non-directive formulated delicate questions and at the same time expects them to behave in a friendly and personal way, it may put interviewers in a double bind’. Smit’s (1995) research on suggestive questions found that the formulation of the probe is usually left to ‘the insight of the interviewer’ and that interviewers often use phrases which are suggestive:

Suggestive questioning is almost absent for fixed choice questions including the use of showcards. On the other hand, suggestive questioning occurs to such a degree with semi-open questions that it is advised not to use this question format in survey research (Smit 1995:115).

Another pointer leading to the conclusion that field-coded questions are problematic is the way in which the interviewer makes explicit that she has a list of options in front of her, although the question is designed so that the respondent does not know this. Making the options list explicit provides her with a way out of the maze of trying to achieve a response formatted in the terms of the response options without the response options being known to the respondent. In this case it would seem logical to ask the question in a different form where the options are obvious to the respondent. For example, *Which two of the following options best describe what determined the timing of your first child?* If the respondent makes the decision among a limited set of alternatives, some of the problems in the interaction might be avoided. It would not, however, solve the problem of adequately representing the realities of these women (Mazeland and ten Have 1998:1; Obermeyer 1997:815; Suchman and Jordan 1990a:237).

That Q167 was initially difficult for the women to answer can be seen from the many pauses, so-called ‘empty’ ‘fillers’, hesitations, and false starts that occur before they answer, indicating dispreferred responses. The interviewer also often pauses and hesitates. For the more straightforward factual questions in the WOC, on the other hand, such as Q20 *How many children have you ever had?* and Q154 *Are you married or in a*

*relationship?* interactional features indicating difficulty in answering are exceptional. The difficulty in answering clearly arises partly from the ambiguity in Q167. On the other hand, it may be a more complex problem, relating to the nature of the timing of pregnancies and births.<sup>155</sup>

For the interviewer the question is also not simple. She has to decide which variant of the question to ask; to interpret what the respondent says in the light of the list of available response options; to match what is said to the response options; to reformulate what is said if the answer does not fit; and to pick up cues from the respondent's answer that might help in pursuing a second option. At the same time she is expected to maintain rapport with the respondent and keep an eye on the clock. The task of negotiation when a respondent's story does not match the options can be frustrating for both parties.

In both groups, those born before and after 1950, women had accidental births and few seemed to make conscious decisions about timing in the terms envisaged by the response options. A certain amount of irony exists in the fact that those who wanted children, such as Kristen and Lindy, did not always have them when they wanted; and many who had not necessarily planned to have a child at a particular time—Ricky, Karen, Coral, Sonya, Jess, Edith, Lyn, Nadia, Kerry, and Debra—became pregnant. Of the 24 women asked this question, only Annegret, Noelle, Jenny, and Dale seemed to consciously decide to have a child at a particular time or talk in terms of planning or an agreement with a partner; this is probably the result of the age bias in the WOC sample. Even when a decision was made, this did not necessarily result in the woman becoming pregnant, as Annegret's situation shows (Chapter 5). For others—Carol, Melinda, Lyn, Liz, Helen, Marilyn, Tonia, Andrea, Lindy, and Joanne—either the decision-making process was unclear from the interview, or determining timing was not an issue for them.

The final analytical chapter, Chapter 7, explores the interaction between the interviewer and respondents on another question, Question 194, in the WOC Survey. This question asks about attitudes to children.

---

<sup>155</sup> However, Oppenheim (1966:9) points out that questions in fact-finding and actuarial surveys are also not very well answered.

## Valuing children

---

The value of children is the subject of a set of attitude and value statements in the *Negotiating the Life Course* (NLC) Survey. Australian demographers and policymakers are interested in knowing about people's attitudes toward children and parenting because of the need to predict future trends in childbearing and to make related policy decisions. Attitudes form public opinion and public policy, influencing behaviour and the choices available in many areas of people's lives. Measurement of attitudes, public opinion and other subjective phenomena are increasingly frequent (Turner and Martin 1984:Vol.1, p.4). This chapter is the third chapter in this thesis dealing with a question in NLC and the *Women on Children* (WOC) Survey.

Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis have already shown that some women's expressed intentions to have more children do not necessarily predict that they will eventually have those children. Chapter 5 has shown that some women find it difficult to assess how likely they are to have a child because a single question asks about too many variables over which they may have no control. These variables correspond to Bongaarts and Potter's (1983) proximate determinants of fertility. Chapter 6 has shown that determining timing of the first birth was a different issue for different ages of women. Having a child was not always a matter of determination. This chapter examines Questions 193 and 194 (Q193, Q194)<sup>156</sup> in the NLC survey, asked again of the 27 women in the WOC Survey. As with Chapter 6, this chapter compares responses from the 1998 WOC Survey with those from Wave 1 NLC in 1996–7. The first sections of the chapter outline the process by which attitudes are measured and good attitude statements are formulated. As with Chapters 5 and 6, this chapter then examines the interaction between the respondents and the interviewer when Q193/194 is asked. The

---

<sup>156</sup> In this chapter, these two questions will be referred to jointly as Q194. Q193 contains the instruction to the respondent; Q194 introduces each of the seven statements. Respondents are only asked to answer Q194.

interaction between respondents and the interviewer is again examined through transcription and analysis of talk in the interviews.

## 7.1 Attitudes and values

Motivations for having children are ‘complex, changing and often ambivalent’ (Hoffman and Hoffman 1973). Fawcett (1988) outlines the history of research on the value of children. Hoffman and Hoffman (1973:20) note four reasons for studying the value parents place on children: to affect motivations for fertility, to anticipate alternative sources of satisfaction if a smaller family is achieved, to predict fertility motivations, and to examine the effect of children on the parent–child relationship. A further reason is to gain understanding of those who do not have children, by choice or otherwise. As more Australian women delay having children, have a smaller number children or do not have them at all [Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2000 #356; Office of the Status of Women (OSW), 1999 #415:21], this understanding becomes more relevant.

As with measurement of any attitude, several measures are needed to obtain information on what people think about having children (Hoffman and Hoffman 1973:25). The concept is ‘multi-faceted, complex and frequently changing—even within the individual’ (Hoffman and Hoffman 1973:35). One way of ascertaining the value people attach to having children is to ask about their attitudes. The definition of attitudes is an issue for ongoing debate (Foddy 1993:158). One definition is people’s ‘evaluations of themselves, other people, events, issues, and material things with some degree of favor and disfavor’ (Moghaddam 1998:100). In measuring attitudes, a person is generally asked to assign a value or make a judgment about the object in question (McGuire 1985:238). Asking direct questions about a person’s attitude or observing a person’s behaviour is not generally as productive as using an attitude scale (Edwards 1957:3–9). Attitude research began early in the twentieth century (McGuire 1985:235–7);<sup>157</sup> by the late 1950s a ‘vast literature’ on attitudes already existed (Edwards 1957:1). Commercial opinion polls simplified the processes used to ascertain attitude (Converse 1984:19–25). This section of the chapter can deal only very briefly with this topic.

---

<sup>157</sup> Converse (1984) documents the early years of attitude measurement, noting the different paths taken by psychologists and sociologists. The psychological approach prevailed, permitting a ‘rigorous approach to quantification’ but was limited to a ‘narrow base of subjects’ (Converse 1984:3–19).

Researchers have assumed that attitudes are, to various degrees, 'behavioral dispositions' (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980:13). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975:8) go so far as to state that specific behaviours can be predicted by knowing a person's attitude: 'Knowledge of a person's attitude, therefore, permits prediction of one or more specific behaviors'. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980:5) also note the role of intention in affecting behaviour. Attitude, intention and behavior will not always correspond exactly; however, 'barring unforeseen events, a person will usually act in accordance with his or her intention'. McGuire (1985:251) suggests that even if current attitudes are poor predictors of future behaviour, they may be more convenient predictors than are current behaviours:

attitudes are less affected by changing situational factors, can be measured more easily and more reliably, and can be abstracted at varying levels of generality. Also, attitudes may stochastically predict behavior en masse even though the two show little within-individual correspondence.

Rational models examining the relationship between attitude and behaviour (the theory of reasoned action and planned behaviour) see attitudes as 'person-determined', 'person-contained', and as causing behaviour (Moghaddam 1998:125). However, attitudes may also follow behaviour, as people fit their attitudes to their behaviour in order to show themselves more favourably to others. Research on cognitive dissonance and self-perception theory implies that it may often be misguided to look at attitudes as predictors (Moghaddam 1998:123). Research on social representations suggests that 'social thinking', including attitudes, may be conceptualised as 'social and public' rather than 'individual and private' (Moghaddam 1998:136).

The attitude-behaviour link remains the subject of much debate and criticism (McGuire 1985:304; Moghaddam 1998:108–10). To what extent methods successfully used in the physical sciences are appropriate in measuring behavioural and social phenomena has been a controversial matter (Oppenheim 1992:154–5). However, attitude can be assumed to play a role as one determinant of intention, and some progress has been made in identifying more clearly the conditions under which attitudes are more likely to predict behaviour (Moghaddam 1998:109). In predicting contraceptive efficacy specifically, for example, Morrison (1989 cited in Moghaddam 1998:104–5) found that attitudes to contraception, measured by 13 different attitude questions, effectively predicted contraceptive use by adolescent women. Thus, in relation to predicting who will have children in the future and who will not, assessing a person's attitude to having



children may be a useful step. People who like children and like being a parent, or the idea of being a parent, may be more likely to have children than are those who do not.

## 7.2 Measuring attitudes

Attitudes are usually measured using one of a number of scales. The pilot stage of forming a scale entails assembling an item pool of attitude or belief statements (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980:72; Edwards 1957:9–11; Oppenheim 1992:63). Often this process involves a literature search of both popular and academic sources for suitable items, together with exploration of the origins, complexities, and ramifications of the attitude areas in question in order to decide precisely what is to be measured. ‘Vivid expressions of attitudes’ (Oppenheim 1966:112–3) and ‘short descriptions of their feelings’ (Edwards 1957:10) are sought from individuals, in a form that may make them suitable for use as statements in an attitude scale.

A set of modal beliefs or attitudes with the same set of response categories is generally used as a response set; modal salient beliefs are identified from a representative sample of the population. Those most frequently produced by this sample constitute the modal set for the population in question, providing a ‘general picture of the beliefs that are assumed to determine the attitudes for most members of the population under investigation’ (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980:72). The statements are thus comparable; however, each statement is phrased in a way that relates to the individual’s beliefs in relation to his or her own behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980:70). Next, a process of selection occurs to determine the number and kind of beliefs to be included in the modal set. The size of the item pool is reduced by statistical means, such as factor analysis and reliability analysis, usually to between five and nine items (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980:63). In this process each item is scored numerically and all items are correlated (Oppenheim 1992:63). Once the set of beliefs is identified, respondents are asked to evaluate the strength of their belief on a bi-polar scale with a number of points.

Attitude is perceived as linear: positive to negative, passing through neutral. Attitude measurement involves placing a person’s attitude on a linear continuum or scale, although Oppenheim (1966:107) notes that attitudes may in fact not be linear. The positive and negative parts of the attitude may not be linear extensions of each other:

Our attempts at measurement then concentrate on trying to place a person's attitude on the straight line or linear continuum, in such a way that he can be described as mildly positive, strongly negative, and so on—preferably in terms of a numerical score or else by means of ranking. There is no proof however that this model of a linear continuum is necessarily correct, though it does make things easier for measurement purposes. For all we know, attitudes may be shaped more like concentric circles or overlapping ellipses or three-dimensional cloud formations.

This complexity has implications for the kinds of scale and the number of items used to measure the attitude. Oppenheim notes particular implications for attitudes of mothers toward children:

In studying the attitudes of mothers to their children we have found that rejection is not the exact opposite of acceptance (as measured by two separate attitude scales); apparently, a variety of other components enter into the attitude of a rejecting mother. Moreover, it is possible for some respondents to be ambivalent and to score highly both on acceptance and on rejection (Oppenheim 1966:108).

Attitudes have intensity and content; their relationship is U-shaped. Thus, the more extreme attitudes, either positive or negative, 'are usually held with much vehemence, whereas the more neutral position may be defended with far less intensity' (Oppenheim 1966:108). Some attitudes are more enduring, deeper, and more embracing than others. It is important to balance the statements on various dimensions of an attitude, so that the resulting scale represents all dimensions. The degree of differentiation in an attitude may differ considerably from one end of the scale to the other (Oppenheim 1966:107–12). By using sets of items, the more stable components are maximised and instability is reduced (Oppenheim 1992:147).

Classical linear attitude scales thus should have four important attributes: unidimensionality and linearity; at least adequate reliability; at least adequate validity; and a scoring system and some statistical norms (Oppenheim 1966:122, 1992:153–4, 171). Attitude questions are more difficult to verify and produce less reliable results than do questions about facts or classification (Oppenheim 1992:143). Attitude scales are 'relatively crude measuring instruments', and, according to Oppenheim (1966:121) we must not expect too much from them: their main function is to divide people roughly into broad groupings with regard to a particular attitude 'in relative and not absolute terms.'

The attitude scale used in NLC is a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale is most relevant for attitude patterning or exploring theories of attitudes (Oppenheim 1966:123).

Likert's primary concern was with uni-dimensionality (making sure all the items would measure the same thing).<sup>158</sup> For each statement respondents place themselves on an attitude continuum on which a number of points are marked.

The reliability of Likert scales tends to be good:

The scale makes no pretence at equal-appearing intervals but by using the internal-consistency method of item selection it approaches uni-dimensionality in many cases. The number of items in a Likert scale is arbitrary, but is sometimes very small (Oppenheim 1966:140).

Oppenheim (1966:140) suggests that the most serious criticism of Likert scales is that the same total score may be obtained in different ways. It also has to be assumed, for example, that a 'strongly agree' response for one item has the meaning as 'strongly agree' for another; 'strongly agree' must be assumed also to have the same meaning for each respondent (Foddy 1993:155). A total score, then, has little meaning, or two or more identical scores may have totally different meanings. For this reason the pattern of responses is often more interesting than the total score. Another difficulty in interpreting scores lies in the fact that the neutral point is difficult to locate and interpret. Scores in the 'middle region' could be due to 'lukewarm responses, lack of knowledge, lack of attitude in the respondent (leading to many 'uncertain' responses); or to the presence of both strongly positive and strongly negative responses, which would more or less balance each other'; thus, the scale may not always be uni-dimensional (Oppenheim 1966:141).

Oppenheim summarises the performance of Likert scales in this way:

In practice, if we remember that equal score intervals do not permit us to make assertions about the equality of underlying attitude differences and that identical scores may have very different meanings, the Likert scales tend to perform very well when it comes to a reliable, rough ordering of people with regard to a particular attitude. Apart from their relative ease of construction, these scales have two other advantages: first, they provide more precise information about the respondent's degree of agreement or disagreement, and respondents usually prefer this to a simple agree/disagree score. Second, it becomes possible to include items whose manifest content is not obviously related to the attitude in question, so that the subtler and deeper ramifications of an attitude can be explored (Oppenheim 1966:141).

---

<sup>158</sup> For a more detailed description of the formation of a Likert-type scale, see Oppenheim (1966:134–42).

Foddy (1993:155), noting the ‘overwhelming popularity’ of such rating scales, suggests that a possible explanation for their popularity is that ‘they appear to be easy to prepare’ and ‘respondents seem to find them easy to use’. However, as Oppenheim (1992:174) observes, ‘no amount of statistical manipulation will produce a good attitude scale unless the ingredients are right’. The following section examines the criteria for judging these ingredients.

### 7.3 Writing good attitude statements

An attitude statement is ‘a single sentence that expresses a point of view, a belief, a preference, a judgement, an emotional feeling, a position *for or against* something’ (Oppenheim 1992:174). Measuring attitudes accurately and writing a successful attitude scale require considerable thought and effort and can be a ‘tricky process’, especially regarding the language and wording of statements (Graham 1997:14). Survey responses are sensitive to all kinds of nuances in wording (Payne 1951:3–15; Schuman and Presser 1981:275). There is ‘no substitute for careful pilot work’ (Oppenheim 1966:112). Statements must be written with care and rewritten if necessary. Statements borrowed from other surveys should be piloted to ensure that they are suitable for use with a different group of respondents (Oppenheim 1992:55).

Oppenheim (1966:113–7; 1992:128–30) provides comprehensive guidelines for writing attitude statements. Statements should be in sentences no longer than 20 words, ‘short and uncomplicated rather than long and garlanded with subordinate clauses’ (Oppenheim 1966:115), so that they do not tax the respondent’s memory. They should avoid double negatives, acronyms, jargon, abbreviations, ambiguous words, loaded words, and technical terms, and should contain only one issue. Proverbs and other popular or well-known sayings tend to provoke unthinking agreement and not everyone knows what they mean. Statements that may have different meanings for different individuals are likely to be problematic. Statements may likewise be problematic if their wording is clumsy or too strong. General observations that reveal little about a respondent’s feelings should be avoided.

Foddy (1993:161) emphasises that the level of generality expected in respondents’ answers should be made explicit; that is, the respondents should be clear whether they should answer in personal or general terms. If a statement cannot translate to ‘I like’ or ‘I

dislike' it may be too vague and difficult to score (Oppenheim 1992:181). Again, Oppenheim's insight is useful and quoted at some length:

We are on the wrong path when many of our respondents start to quibble or want to change the items or add to them; when there are many 'uncertain' or 'Don't know' responses; when items are skipped or crossed out; when respondents do not seem interested in discussing the scale or, if they want to discuss it, do so chiefly in order to explain how it fails to cater to their own attitudes. We are on the right path when respondents seem to recognize the statements...; when they make free use of the 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree' response categories; when they seem excited or angered by some of the statements that they disagree with, or show signs of satisfaction that their own views are well represented; when they seem eager to provide us with more examples or more information along the lines of certain statements; and, of course, when there are few signs that they reject the items by making amendments or deletions, skipping, giving 'Don't know' responses, and so on (Oppenheim 1966:114).

Edwards (1957:13–4) provides criteria for formulating attitude statements, based on research from the 1920s–1940s. His list is reproduced in full below:

1. Avoid statements that refer to the past rather than to the present.
2. Avoid statements that are factual or capable of being interpreted as factual.
3. Avoid statements that may be interpreted in more than one way.
4. Avoid statements that are irrelevant to the psychological object under consideration.
5. Avoid statements that are likely to be endorsed by almost everyone or by almost no one.
6. Select statements that are believed to cover the entire range of the affective range scale of interest.
7. Keep the language of the statements simple, clear, and direct.
8. Statements should be short, rarely exceeding 20 words.
9. Each statement should contain only one complete thought.
10. Statements containing universals such as *all*, *always*, *none*, and *never* often introduce ambiguity and should be avoided.
11. Words such as *only*, *just*, *merely*, and others of a similar nature should be used with care and moderation in writing statements.
12. Whenever possible, statements should be in the form of simple sentences rather than in the form of compound or complex sentences.
13. Avoid the use of words that may not be understood by those who are to be given the completed scale.
14. Avoid the use of double negatives.

Because attitudinal questions are more sensitive to error than many other types of questions, Oppenheim stresses that no deviations should be allowed in the way that interviewers deliver these questions. While he advocates a certain amount of flexibility for interviewers with regard to other types of questions, with attitude questions interviewers should be 'forbidden to explain or reword in any way' (Oppenheim 1992:87). Probing in a neutral way is especially important with these questions, as biased

probing is one of the main sources of bias in measuring attitude. The other main causes of bias in measuring attitude are: poor maintenance of rapport; rephrasing of attitude questions; careless prompting; poor management of show cards; asking questions out of sequence; unreliable fieldcoding; and biased recording of verbatim answers (Oppenheim 1992:90–1, 96–7). Because interviewer behaviour, as well as the wording and interpretation of concepts, is considered crucial to the success of measuring attitudes, closer examination of interaction could be useful. The use of CA plays a particularly useful role in making transparent the turn-by-turn interaction over each statement. Not only can we observe the interviewer's behaviour, but also the respondent's reactions to each statement, as well as the process of negotiation of the response.

#### 7.4 Questions on valuing children

Attitude questions on valuing children have been routinely used in many national and international surveys. Five of the seven attitude statements in NLC were based on items created by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), a cross-national collaborative program established by four countries in 1983, extending to some 37 countries in 2001 (ISSP 2001). A sixth item, also used by the ISSP, came from the earlier United States *General Social Survey*, a national data source for social scientists conducted by the National Opinion Research Center since 1972 (T.W. Smith, personal communication, 2001).<sup>159</sup> The seventh statement was developed for the 1971 *Australian Family Survey* (1971b).

The 1988 ISSP module, *Family and Changing Sex Roles I*, was the fourth ISSP module to be developed and was conducted in nine countries between 1988 and 1990. This was followed in 1994 by the module, *Family and Changing Gender Roles II*, conducted in 23 countries between 1993 and 1995. Australia, as a member of the ISSP, used the first module in 1990 and the second in a 1994 survey, *Family and the Environment* (International Social Science Surveys Australia (ISSA) 1994). *Family and Changing Gender Roles III* is planned for 2002. The ISSP modules, in a self-administered questionnaire, include Likert-type items making up sets of attitude statements on various issues concerning children and child care, marriage and cohabitation, divorce, and earnings of couples.

---

<sup>159</sup> See Davis and Smith (1992:7–18) for background to sources of questions in the *General Social Survey*.

Respondents to the 1988 ISSP module were asked whether they agreed or disagreed on a five-point scale: *strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree*, with an option *can't choose*. In the 1994 module, the response options were changed to *Yes!! Yes?? No No!!*, also with a *can't choose* option. For example:

Q1a: *A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work (Yes!! Yes?? No No!!).*

The ISSP statements are widely used elsewhere. Apart from the ISSP modules used by national surveys worldwide for purposes of international comparison, such as the Australian 1994 *Family and the Environment* survey, some of these statements are used in other kinds of surveys. Examples include *The Fertility Race*, a survey of American attitudes on children and family conducted by Minnesota Public Radio (1999), Families Worldwide's *Snapshots of America's Families* (Wang and D'Orio n.d.), and the Urban Institute's *National Survey of America's Families* (Wertheimer, Long and Vandivere 2001).

Most of the statements used in NLC were originally developed as part of other item pools. Evans notes that as part of these pools the items were tested in their measurement of a particular theoretical construct (M. Evans, personal communication, 2001). The averaging process by which the multiple-item indices were built greatly reduces the random measurement error. If used separately, such items are likely to contain a great deal of random measurement error, such that there is a 'real risk of missing a relationship that is generally present' (M. Evans, personal communication, 2001). It is beyond the scope of this research to ascertain the statistical relationship among NLC statements. This chapter examines the nature of each of the seven statements and the interaction between interviewer and respondent in negotiating the response recorded on the interview schedule.

## 7.5 NLC and WOC Questions 193 and 194 on valuing children

NLC Q193 introduces NLC Q194. Q194 asks about the strength of a respondent's attitude to each of seven statements, using a five-point bi-polar scale: *strongly agree, agree, mixed feelings, disagree and strongly disagree*. Before Q194, the respondent has been asked NLC Q165 to evaluate how likely she is to have a child or another child, using a bi-polar scale with six points: *very likely, likely, not sure, unlikely, most unlikely, and definitely not*. By

analysing responses to Q194 together with Q165, researchers may hope to use the expectancy–value model to determine the attitude of the NLC women towards having children, given that attitudes are predispositions to behaving in a particular way (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975:8–9), and, thereby, to predict the likelihood of these women having children. Chapter 4 summarised how NLC Q194 was asked of WOC respondents. Box 7.1 shows how Q193 and Q194 appeared on the WOC Survey interview schedule.

**Box 7.1                *Women on Children Survey 1998, Questions 193 and 194***

<b>Q193: I'm going to read you some statements about children and I'd like you to tell me whether you STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE or STRONGLY DISAGREE with each one:</b>	
 <b>Q194: Do you STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE?</b>	
1. A life without children is not fully complete	1 2 3 4 5
2. Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother	1 2 3 4 5
3. Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the father	1 2 3 4 5
4. Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy	1 2 3 4 5
5. It is better not to have children because they are such a burden	1 2 3 4 5
6. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work	1 2 3 4 5
7. Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother	1 2 3 4 5

**Source:** WOC Interview Schedule, 1998

**7.6        Responses to Question 194**

Table 7.1 compares the pattern of responses for Q194 in NLC Wave 1 and the 1998 WOC Survey. Of the 27 WOC respondents, only Liz gave exactly the same responses in both surveys. Some responses were very close—‘agree’ compared with ‘strongly agree’, for example; and some were very different—‘strongly disagree’ compared with ‘agree.’ This is apparently not unusual with survey responses, and common with attitude questions. Respondents’ attitudes may have changed over two years, and other variables such as interviewer variation may affect responses.

Payne (1951:17), in his classic work *The Art of Asking Questions*, comments:

Stability of replies is no test of a meaningful question. The more meaningless a question is, the more likely it is to produce consistent percentages when repeated.



Schuman and Presser (1981:322) comment in *Mysteries of Replication and Non-Replication*:

First, we doubt that our experience with nonreplication is peculiar to this research ... Rather, most survey investigators have been spared the shock of having a cherished conclusion upset by the failure to replicate because most survey reports are based on a single data set. Possibly that will change as the growth of telephone surveys encourages investigators to think more naturally in terms of replication.

Oppenheim notes that the most serious criticism of such scales is their 'lack of reproducibility (in the technical sense)' (Oppenheim 1966:140). Reproducibility of attitude statement responses is, therefore, not considered as important as the general pattern of these responses (Oppenheim 1966:140).

Foddy (1993:4), too, observes that many sorts of answers are 'strikingly variable over time'. The key issue, according to Foddy (1993:17, 22–3) is comparability of answers in the face of various sources of variability in questions and answers: multi-dimensionality of the topic; differing levels of generality; differing theoretical levels; and whether the utterance is framed in a descriptive, explanatory, or evaluative way. Wilson and Hodges's (1992) examination of the stability of attitudes shows that attitudes are temporary constructions: 'attitudes are constructed from the available data and thus vary from time to time', as they reflect whatever data are accessible when a person evaluates the attitude object in question (Wilson and Hodges 1992:60). They caution that when asking about attitudes, the researcher needs to consider the context in which the asking was done and what the respondent was thinking about at the time. That is, context and what people are thinking about can cause substantial attitude change.

Smith (1984:215) notes that inconsistency in attitudes over time has been interpreted to mean that non-attitudes were prevalent. That is, on many issues many people did not hold a position; this resulted in apparently arbitrary responses to questions of attitude. Smith (1984:247) concludes: 'nonattitudes, instrument error and molecular change are all contributors to the low consistency...'. In Smith's view, no simple statistical model can separate these different factors. The answer may lie in a qualitative approach:

By probing individuals rather than aggregates, we will gain a much better understanding of the error structure of opinion questions, attitude change, and even of how the human mind works (Smith 1984:247).

The following analysis of WOC interview data examines attitude data for individuals in one type of qualitative approach.

**Table 7.1 Responses to Question 194 of 27 WOC respondents, NLC Wave 1, 1996–7 and WOC Survey, 1998**

Survey	Respondent	Statements 1–7	Respondent	Statements 1–7
NLC Wave 1	Annegret	3 4 4 2 4 2 4	Carol	2 2 2 2 4 2 4
WOC		3 4 4 3 5 2 4		2 4 4 2 4 2 4
NLC Wave 1	Lyn	1 5 5 1 5 1 1	Melinda	1 4 4 1 4 2 1
WOC		1 4 4 1 5 1 1		1 4 4 1 5 1 1
NLC Wave 1	Chrissy	5 1 5 2 5 1 5	Edith	1 1 5 2 5 1 2
WOC		5 1 4 -1 5 1 5		2 2 4 2 4 2 2
NLC Wave 1	Andrea	2 1 2 1 5 1 1	Coral	4 2 2 4 4 2 4
WOC		1 4 4 1 5 2 1		2 1 4 2 4 2 4
NLC Wave 1	Tonia	2 2 2 2 4 2 4	Karen	4 4 4 2 5 4 4
WOC		2 2 4 1 4 1 4		4 4 4 2 5 3 4
NLC Wave 1	Kristen	1 4 4 1 4 4 1	Liz	4 2 4 2 4 1 4
WOC		1 4 4 2 5 5 1		4 2 4 2 4 1 4
NLC Wave 1	Sonya	2 1 4 2 5 2 2	Nadia	1 4 4 2 5 4 4
WOC		2 4 5 2 5 1 1		2 4 4 4 5 2 1
NLC Wave 1	Dale	5 5 5 1 4 2 3	Helen	1 2 4 2 4 3 4
WOC		5 4 4 1 5 1 5		1 4 5 1 5 2 1
NLC Wave 1	Jess	4 4 4 2 4 2 4	Jenny	4 4 4 2 4 2 2
WOC		4 5 5 R 5 1 1		4 4 4 1 5 1 5
NLC Wave 1	Joanne	2 4 4 2 5 2 2	Kerry	2 4 4 2 4 4 4
WOC		2 4 4 2 5 2 1		4 4 4 2 4 2 4
NLC Wave 1	Ricky	4 1 5 1 4 1 4	Beverly	4 4 4 4 4 2 4
WOC		2 1 5 1 5 1 2		5 4 4 4 5 1 5
NLC Wave 1	Tina	4 4 4 2 5 2 5	Lindy	2 4 4 2 4 2 4
WOC		4 2 2 1 4 1 5		4 4 5 2 5 2 4
NLC Wave 1	Merilyn	2 4 4 2 4 3 2	Debra	1 1 2 1 4 1 5
WOC		2 4 4 2 4 4 2		2 1 2 1 4 1 5
NLC Wave 1	Noelle	2 4 4 2 4 2 3		
WOC		1 2 2 1 5 2 2		

**Notes:** 1 strongly agree; 2 agree; 3 mixed feelings; 4 disagree; 5 strongly disagree; R refused; -1 don't know. Responses that differ between the two surveys are shaded.

**Sources:** NLC 1997, WOC Survey 1998

## 7.7 Interaction on WOC Question 194

The interviewer–respondent negotiation to complete Q194 was the most troublesome of all questions in the WOC interviews. As with previous WOC questions, three interacting factors shape the negotiation of the response: the respondent, the interviewer and the statement. These three elements interact (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000; Schaeffer 1991a).

The number of turns at talk between the two interview participants, interviewer and respondent, is used as a rough indicator of the complexity of the interaction, as in Chapter 6. The shortest way of disposing of each statement in Q194 is with an adjacency

pair, consisting of a statement being read out by the interviewer, followed immediately by a response from the respondent that meets the requirements of one of the response options (Chapter 3) (Maynard and Schaeffer 2002:15–6; van der Zouwen 2002:55–6).<sup>160</sup>

The following segment from Tina's interview is an example of the minimal question–answer sequence adjacency pair:

**Segment 7.1 Tina (Disagree/Agree)<sup>161</sup>**

65. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom  
66. of the mother. do you strongly agree, agree,  
67. disagree or strongly disagree (°with that°)  
68. Tina: agree.

[MMPH#12:65–107]

The interview with Tina, who had no children and was not in a relationship, took the lowest number of turns (17 turns) of all WOC interviews over Q194. The interview transcript for this question is reproduced in full in Chapter 4 (Segment 4.43). It demonstrates that the entire interaction over this question proceeded in a trouble-free way, with minimal interaction over each attitude statement.

Sometimes the basic question–answer sequence is followed by an acknowledgement from the interviewer.

**Segment 7.2 Coral (Disagree/Agree)**

149. Int: sure. it is better not to have children because they are  
150. such a burden. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or  
151. strongly disagree.  
152. Coral: °disagree.°  
153. Int: °disagree.°

[MMPH#18:149–53]

---

<sup>160</sup> Sometimes the interviewer acknowledges the respondent's answer and goes on directly to ask about the next statement. Whether this should be counted as two turns is debatable, as the respondent could take a turn at that point if she wishes but usually chooses not to. In the rough counting of turns in this chapter, I have not counted these as two turns.

<sup>161</sup> The responses for the respondent in the two surveys are provided in brackets with each segment of talk. The first is the response for NLC Wave 1 1996–7; the second is the response for the 1998 WOC Survey.

This interaction between Annie and Coral is also trouble free. However, by far the majority of WOC interviews display expanded sequences for Q194. The interaction between Annie and Helen is trouble free but Helen's answer is expanded:

### Segment 7.3 Helen (Agree/Strongly agree)

212. Int: \$okay\$ .hh now watching children grow up, is life's  
 213. greatest joy. [do ] you strongly agree, agree,=  
 214. Helen: [.hh]  
 215. Int: =disa[gree or strongly disagree]  
 216. Helen: [↑yeah ↑strongly agree, ] it has it ups- its ups  
 217. and downs, but it's more ups than downs.  
 218. Int: (°right°)

[MMPH#22:212-8]

This turn expansion does not result in trouble. Annie already has a response to the question and acknowledges the end of the sequence with the sequence-closing third, '°right°'.

In theory, Q194 could be completed with a minimum of 14 turns. 'Trouble-free' for conversation analysts may not coincide with 'trouble-free' for survey researchers. Thus, the length and complexity of interaction may not necessarily indicate a problem with the statement for survey researchers, as long as an appropriate response is achieved. For example, Oppenheim (1966:114) noted that one criterion in judging whether a statement is useful is whether the respondent seems eager to provide more examples or more information. If this is the case, the interaction is expanded usefully for the survey researcher but may indicate trouble for the conversation analyst. Conversation analysis of interview data can show, however, whether this and other criteria are met.

The estimate of the number of turns taken to complete all seven statements in Q194, that is the question introduction and each of the statements, ranges from around 17 turns in the case of the shortest interview to nearly 200 turns in the longest. However, as mentioned earlier, the occurrence of a long or 'troubled' interaction does not necessarily imply that the statement is inherently problematic or that the consequently recorded response is problematic. Thus, the interviews can be categorised as minimal and trouble free (Segment 7.1), non-minimal and trouble free (Segments 7.2, 7.3), and non-minimal with trouble. Non-minimal answers with trouble constitute most of the examples for this chapter.

Some interviews seemed to proceed reasonably smoothly through each of the statements, with only minor diversions for points of clarification or repetition. For most interviews, however, and for some statements in particular, an appropriate response took considerable negotiation. The discussion of the segments in this chapter is by no means exhaustive. Conversation analysts will certainly find many more noteworthy features than are covered in the brief discussion of each segment.

One non-random source of trouble may be the mode of the interview. The ISSP questionnaires are self-administered. Thus, respondents do not have to remember the statement and the list of response options. To remember a list of options, as well as the statement to which they apply, when these are delivered over the telephone without a visual stimulus, may be a demanding task, especially where the statement is long (Oppenheim 1992:181). Self-completion eliminates the problem of remembering response options but may disguise other problems in deciding on a response, such as the respondent's need for clarification. As both NLC and the WOC Survey were telephone surveys, the length of the statement and its response options may be relevant.

### **7.7.1     *Statement 1: A life without children is not fully complete***

This statement, as used in the ISSP modules, *Family and Changing Sex Roles I* and *Family and Changing Gender Roles II*, read *A marriage without children is not fully complete*. The wording was changed slightly in NLC to *A life without children is not fully complete*—probably to take account of non-marital relationships that produce children. Evans notes that this statement is ‘a translation of an item previously developed and used by Professor Max Haller and colleagues at the University of Graz’; her memory is that it is ‘part of a three-item index measuring the degree to which people feel that parenthood is an essential part of human development/achieving one’s potential’ (M. Evans, personal communication, 2001).

Seventeen of the 27 respondents had no apparent difficulty in interpreting this statement; they did not ask for repetition or clarification. Ten respondents asked for repetition of the statement or response options, or clarification of the intent of the statement itself. Nadia, for example, asked for clarification of the intent of the statements before Annie, the interviewer, delivered the first statement:

#### Segment 7.4 Nadia (Strongly agree/Agree)

87. Int: and (.) um (.) i'm going to read out some statements  
 88. about children, and I'd like you to tell me (whether  
 89. you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly  
 90. disagree with each one.)  
 91. Nadia: and this is n- how i feel now.  
 92. Int: ↑YEAH. ↑YEAH. as a general statement.  
 93. Nadia: yeah.

[MMPH#21:87-93]

When Nadia asks how she should interpret the statement, Annie confirms that it is how she feels 'now' and 'a general statement.' Other respondents asked for repetition or clarification after the first statement was delivered. The interviews with Debra and Joanne (Segments 7.5, 7.6) and Sonya (not shown) illustrate the first type of request for repetition or clarification:

#### Segment 7.5 Debra (Strongly agree/Agree)

83. Int: °and the first one is,° a life without children is  
 84. not fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree,  
 85. disagree or strongly disagree.  
 86. (3.0)  
 87. Debra: u::m:: (2.0) a- t- what are the two middle ones?  
 88. Int: agree and disagree. there's strongly agree, agree,  
 89. disa[gree-  
 90. Debra: [no::, i:: (0.3) i:: a:gree.=i don't s- um i: i  
 91. think (1.3) t! (.) um °wait a minute° i think it  
 92. would be awful not to have children, but i don't  
 93. (.) um disagree with it totally=i'd rather have no  
 94. children if i was going to be an awful mother,  
 95. Int: ri:::ght.=  
 96. Debra: =no:w °i'll (.) agree:: with the statement° i- th::-  
 97. oh no wai- °wait a minute° [what was the statement?  
 98. Int: [°i'll° read that a[gain  
 99. Debra: [YES  
 100. SEE SORRY  
 101. Int: °that's° alright=a life without chil[dren, ] is=  
 102. Debra: [children]  
 103. Int: =not fully complete.  
 104. Debra: °°that's right°° yes. i agree. (0.3) °yeah.°

[MMPH#27:83-104]

Debra's request for repetition of the two middle response options (line 87) and her later request for repetition of the statement (line 97) seems to indicate that keeping the statement and options in her mind was a difficult task. Debra pauses for three seconds, indicating that answering this question is hard for her. The fact that this kind of request for repetition occurred more frequently with the first statement, a shorter and less complex statement than some of the later statements, implies that there was an element

of familiarity involved in absorbing the information, particularly the list of response options. The negotiation over the statement itself prolongs the interaction considerably: Annie asks the question in lines 83–5. Debra's response—the second pair-part to Annie's question—appears only in line 104.

Joanne suggests that her confusion may be because she is tired, although her first answer (lines 157–8) seems to indicate that she has understood quite adequately:

#### Segment 7.6 Joanne (Agree/Agree)

154. Int:       ·hh and the first one is, a life without children is not  
 155.           fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or  
 156.           strongly disagree.  
 157. Joanne:   ↑u:m (2.6) ↑oh. ↑dear. that'd be (a dark world for us  
 158.           if)=you said without.  
 159. Int:       um (.) a [life without children] is [not fully complete.  
 160. Joanne:                   [life without children]       [yeah  
 161. (2.0)  
 162. Joanne:   ↑ummmhh ( ) yea::h=i'd have to:: a- fully complete.  
 163.           [oh yeah=i'd ] have to agree::,  
 164. Int:       [so s- strong-]  
 165. Int:       >oh sorry<  
 166. Joanne:   yeah=i'd have to y- ↑u:m (.) yea:h, >hang on,< i'm- i'm a  
 167.           bit tired, an i've been u(h)p si(h)nce about five, so i  
 168.           [might ] (.) get it back to front that's all.  
 169. Int:       [↑well-]  
 170. Joanne:   [=i'm likely       ] to do, ·hhh [↑so-  
 171. Int:       [that's alright,]                   [oh i see, °i see°=  
 172. Joanne:   =yeah. so i think that life without children, yes- u:m-  
 173.           (1.3) <i-is not comple::te, (0.6) u::m i would  
 174.           a:gree::,=i wouldn't say s:trongly agree.> righteo,

[MMPH#10:154–74]

A potential difficulty with the way this statement is phrased is the double negative inherent in 'without' and 'not fully complete'. Joanne demonstrates difficulty with the statement in her request for clarification of 'without'. The difficulty of the double negative in the statement is further compounded by negatives among the response options: 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree.' This is a difficulty foreshadowed by attitude survey researchers (Converse and Presser 1986:13; Edwards 1957:14; Foddy 1993:49–50; Oppenheim 1966:115, 1992:128). The difficulty is not evident for most respondents, but for Joanne the negatives seem to be confusing: 'i might (.) get it back to front that's all.' She repeats the statement herself (lines 172–3) in a way that suggests that she is clarifying it. Debra and Joanne verbalised their confusion about the phrasing of the question or its response options. Some respondents, such as Sonya (not shown), requested repetition and hinted at difficulty, but the nature of the difficulty was unclear.

Other respondents seemed to be unsure about how to interpret the statement itself and how to respond to it. This led to a second type of request about the meaning or intent of the statement. Two issues are important here: first, what Annie says when asked to clarify; and second, how the respondent interprets what Annie says as shown by the frame of her answer. Answers from Carol, Edith, Merilyn, Dale, Kristen and Annegret (Segments 7.7–12) highlight the uncertainties involved. Lindy and Nadia also expressed uncertainty (segments not shown).

Carol's faltering start to her answer shows clearly her difficulty in interpreting the intent of the statement:

### Segment 7.7 Carol (Agree/Agree)

- 119 Int: now the first one is, a life without children is not  
 120 fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree,  
 121 disagree, or strongly disagree  
 122 Carol: o::h, hhh ·hh >i'm not-< oh °maybe°.- it's so  
 123 ↑personal. ↑is ↑it ↑just for me or in general.  
 124 Int: well it's a general statement that you- (.) whether  
 125 you agree  
 126 Carol: [yeah ↑um (.) well i guess- hh ·hh a life without  
 127 children is  
 128 Int: °not fully complete. [do you strongly agree, agree,=  
 129 Carol: [hhh  
 130 Int: =disagree, or strongly disagree°  
 131 Carol: °o::h° ·hh i agree. but not strongly=i think it could  
 132 be for some women¿

[MMPH#15:119–32]

Carol asks Annie for clarification (line 123): 'it's so ↑personal. ↑is ↑it ↑just for me or in general.' According to the rules for standardised interviewing, particularly as they apply to attitude questions, Annie should have left the decision to Carol, repeating the statement if necessary (Oppenheim 1992:87). Instead, Annie explains: 'well it's a general statement that you- (.) whether you agree.' This in itself is a rather ambivalent answer. Carol opts for 'agree', but her qualifying statement indicates her ambivalence: 'I agree. but not strongly=I think it could be for some women¿'. That is, 'agree' seems to be related to who is covered by the statement rather than how intensely she feels about it.

Edith's answer, like Carol's, shows a concern with the coverage of the statement, that is, to whom it applies:



### Segment 7.8 Edith (Strongly agree/Agree)

146. Int: the first one is, a life without children is not  
 147. fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree,  
 148. disagree, or strongly disagree.  
 149. (1.3)  
 150. Edith: t! i agree.  
 151. Int: (° °)  
 152. Edith: i don't strongly disagree because i think (  
 153. ) other people (.) if they can't have  
 154. children (.) they have a life (.) that's something  
 155. different.  
 156. Int: ah (.) so, you would- you said you would=  
 157. Edith: =i agree. yeah.

[MMPh#17:146-57]

Edith cannot answer straight away. Her pause (line 149) indicates trouble. When it comes, Edith's 'agree', like Carol's, is about herself. She, like Carol, does not 'strongly agree' because she does not want to answer for other people (lines 152-5)(apparently Edith's 'disagree' in line 152 was an error). Thus, her answer is less about the intensity of her own feeling in relation to her own situation and more about allowing the possibility for differences in what makes life fully complete.

Merilyn, like Carol and Edith, is concerned about speaking for other people:

### Segment 7.9 Merilyn (Agree/Agree)

131. Int: and (.) the first one is, a life without children  
 132. is not fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree,  
 133. disagree, or strongly disagree.  
 134. (0.3)  
 135. Merilyn: oh. (1.6) well- in my case i would (.) agree. but-  
 136. but with other people, see (.) it's hard to know.  
 137. ↓really. ↑yes.  
 138. Int: as a general statement, would you say that a life  
 139. without children is not fully complete.  
 140. Merilyn: i would think, yeah that's a fair general statement.  
 141. Int: so- you wou[ld agree  
 142. Merilyn: [yeah yeah i'd agree. °with  
 143. tha[t.°  
 144. Int: [and also ( statement)  
 145. Merilyn: °yeah°

[MMPh#13:131-45]

Although Merilyn's pause before answering (line 134) is shorter than Edith's, it nevertheless shows that the statement is troublesome. When Annie repeats the statement with the preface 'as a general statement', Merilyn agrees that this is 'a fair general statement.' Unfortunately, what Annie says in line 144 is not audible. The view that Merilyn holds about her own situation and what, in general, she considers fair appear to

coincide in this case. It is clear, however, that two dimensions, a personal and a general, are present for most respondents in their responses to this question. The response option circled, however, may represent the general or the personal, and, where the interaction is not transparent, it is impossible to tell which. Thus, in the cases where the respondent gives an immediate response to the statement, as with Tina and Coral (Segments 7.1, 7.2), it is also impossible to tell whether she interprets the statement in personal or general terms.

An additional puzzle is that, for some respondents, agreement and disagreement appear to represent the same attitude. For Dale, a consideration of how this statement might apply to other people leads her to strongly disagree:

**Segment 7.10 Dale (Strongly disagree/Strongly disagree)**

126. Int: and the first one is, a life without children is not  
 127. fully complete. [do you-  
 128. Dale: [i dis-  
 129. Int: >sorry<  
 130. Dale: no=i don't agree with that=i think that (.) um- for some  
 131. people it can be.  
 132. Int: sure. so you disagree, or strongly disagree.  
 133. Dale: i'd probly strongly disagree.

[MMPh#8:126–33]

Dale's hedged strong disagreement gives a contradictory impression.<sup>162</sup> However, her strong disagreement seems to represent the same attitude as Edith's, Marilyn's and Carol's agreement. That is, all four respondents qualify their answer in terms of the statement applying to other people. Dale's comment 'I think that (.) um- for some people it can be' suggests that her disagreement, again hedged, may be related to the coverage of the statement. Payne (1951:22) mentions the same phenomenon of different people giving opposite responses that represent the same thing; in his example, 'yes' and 'no' could represent the same attitude.<sup>163</sup>

Kristen, however, responds to the statement as it applies to her personal situation:

<sup>162</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.4, speakers sometimes 'hedge their bets' using 'hedges' such as 'I think', 'sort of' or 'probably'.

<sup>163</sup> Payne's (1951:22) example 'Whose zoo?' shows how 'Yes' and 'No' answers could mean the same thing in the case of the question, *Do you think the sale of the zoo to the meat packer should go through, or not?*

### Segment 7.11 Kristen (Strongly agree/Strongly agree)

167. Int: and the first one is, a life without children is not  
 168. fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree,  
 169. disagree, or strongly disa[gree  
 170. Kristen: [↑we::ll i think a lot of  
 171. people it's different but to me: because i've always  
 172. wanted them and because (.) ·hh u:m (.) my periods  
 173. have never been regular, it's very important to me.  
 174. Int: ri:ght. °right°=  
 175. Kristen: =so:: you kno:w (.) because i never got my periods  
 176. regular, and i thought i couldn't have children ·hh=  
 177. Int: =°right°=  
 178. Kristen: =so:: to me=and because i looked after children when  
 179. i was younger,  
 180. Int: ye[a:h  
 181. Kristen: so[rt of knew what to do, and everything, ·hh i  
 182. didn't feel complete unless i had children=so- (.) it  
 183. was very important to me, yeah.  
 184. Int: (°ri:ght.°) so a life without children is not fully  
 185. complete. do you agree with that.  
 186. Kristen: u:m (0.6) we:ll- to me, if you're speaking [to °me°  
 187. Int: [°↑yeah  
 188. ↑yeah to ↑you=this is [your] own=  
 189. Kristen: [yeah]  
 190. Int: =([personal opinion]<]  
 191. Kristen: [yeah ] u:m for me, yes. [because  
 192. Int: [so would  
 193. you- would you say you agree, or strongly agree.  
 194. Kristen: i'd strongly agree with [that.  
 195. Int: [strongly agree=  
 196. Kristen: =yeah=because children i think make your life really,  
 197. Int: right=  
 198. Kristen: =°yeah°=  
 199. Int: =now the next question is ((next question))

[MMPH#6:167-99]

Kristen also mentions other people in her initial answer (lines 170-3): '↑we:ll i think a lot of people it's different but to me.' After considerable elaboration from Kristen, Annie repeats the statement, followed by a leading question 'do you agree with that.' Again, Kristen attempts to sort out the coverage of the statement: 'we:ll- to me, if you're speaking to °me°'. Annie interrupts (line 187), stressing '↑you', that it is Kristen's 'own personal opinion'; that is, her response should be her personal opinion. However, this response in itself does not clarify whether the statement itself should be taken to apply to her personally or to anyone. Is her personal opinion about a general situation or is it a personal opinion about her own situation? Kristen repeats 'u:m for me, yes.' and strongly agrees with the statement. The confusion remains in the expansion she gives on her answer: 'yeah=because children I think make your life really,' The phrase 'your life' is ambiguous; it could be interpreted personally as 'my life' or generally as 'someone's life' (Sacks 1995:Vol.1, pp.348-53).

Annegret was the only respondent whose response to this statement was recorded as 'mixed feelings.' Annegret termed her response 'neutral.' A neutral response was not among those explicitly offered by the interviewer, but 'mixed feelings' was allowed in the options on the interview schedule, in line with conventional practice in standardised interviewing. Annegret interpreted the statement personally, with no mention of other women:

**Segment 7.12 Annegret (Mixed feelings/Mixed feelings)**

88. Int: · hhhh and the first one is, a life without children is not  
 89. fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or  
 90. [strongly disa-  
 91. Annegret: [t! o(h) \$i remember these questions from last time\$  
 92. · hhh [u::hmmm ha ha:::] ]  
 93. Int: [>yeah, well you do:, (they're funny question-)<]  
 94. Annegret: =\$they were silly last time too\$ [· hhh ]=  
 95. Int: [o(h) heh heh]  
 96. Annegret: =um heh u:m (1.0) hhh  
 97. (0.3)  
 98. Int: >i'll read it out again.<=  
 99. Annegret: =>yeah no no i remember it< [um · hhh  
 100. Int: [ >oh you remember it<  
 101. Annegret: hhhhhh (2.0) it's a really hard one to answer  
 102. becau::se (.) >you know< um life is different now  
 103. with a child than it was before a child, and i wouldn't-  
 104. · hh i mean if i hadn't had a child i probably wouldn't  
 105. regret not having one, but-, hh having had one, it's a  
 106. very (.) important part of my life [so, (.) · hhh] i c- i=  
 107. Int: [yeah yeah ]  
 108. Annegret: =don't think i can actually (1.0) °i think° i have to be  
 109. neutral on that one, hhhh=  
 110. Int: =sure. i'll- >i'll just read that again< a life without  
 111. children is not fully complete. (.) so you- you're  
 112. neutral, neither agree nor di[sagree.  
 113. Annegret: [yeah. yeah.

[MMP#1:88-113]

Annegret clearly interprets this question personally, referring in her answer (lines 101–6) only to herself and the hypothetical situation of her not having had a child. She can neither agree nor disagree, comparing the possibility of not having had a child with the reality: 'i mean if i hadn't had a child i probably wouldn't regret not having one, but-, hh having had one, it's a very (.) important part of my life'. Her neutrality relates to her own ambivalence in being able to see both sides of the issue in relation to her own situation. Schaeffer and Thomson (1992:48–53) mention several types of 'state' uncertainty expressed by respondents to questions on wanting to have a child: neutrality, lack of clarity, ambivalence, indecision, and mixed expressions. Annegret does not appear to be neutral in the sense that Schaeffer and Thomson outline; that is, her answer does not

appear to reflect 'low intensity' feelings or feelings that cannot be perceived (Schaeffer and Thomson 1992:49). Her explanation of how she feels seems more to reflect ambivalence; that is, she has 'opposing or mixed feelings—moderate or strong' towards that statement (Schaeffer and Thomson 1992:50). The response option 'mixed feelings' was recorded for Annegret. 'Mixed feelings' implies a mixture of positive and negative reactions, some positive and some negative; although, it could be argued that Annegret interprets the statement in two different ways, reacting differently to each.

### *Summary*

This section has dealt mainly with the interviews where interaction over Statement 1 was troubled for some reason. For 17 respondents this statement did not appear to pose a problem. They were able, like Tina (Segment 7.1), to respond in terms of a response option without seeking repetition or clarification. Whether these 'no-trouble' women interpreted the statement in a personal or general way is not transparent. However, the interview interaction with the 10 respondents who asked for repetition or clarification, or asked about the intent or meaning of the statement itself, shows difficulties in the way the statement was clarified and interpreted. The analysis of the interaction shows that Annie's clarifications were inconsistent, breaking the rules for interviewer behaviour in standardised interviews, and that the respondents interpreted both the statement itself and what Annie said about it in different ways. Some respondents, like Kristen and Annegret, interpreted the statement in terms of their own personal situation, and some, like Carol and Edith, responded to it as a general statement. Some respondents, like Marilyn, expressed a clear reluctance to speak for all women (or people) in a general way. Dale, Carol and Edith show that this reluctance could lead a respondent either to agree or disagree. Debra's answer related to another aspect again: the decision to have children.

The transcribed responses of those who gave more extended answers to this statement assist in illustrating the processes that women went through in answering this question. Requests for repetition and clarification were common; most respondents could not answer the question without pauses or hesitation; and most of the negotiations were prolonged by answers that were qualified, hedged and expanded in some way. The segments shown here give a clue as to the ways in which the responses were formulated.

In 17 interviews no request for clarification was made. However, the meaning of the final response cannot be interpreted, as the basis on which the women made their responses is unclear. This statement, then, is ambiguous, and, according to guidelines for writing attitude statements, such statements should be avoided (Edwards 1957:12,14; Foddy 1993; Oppenheim 1966:113–7, 1992:181; Payne 1951:234; Schuman and Presser 1981).

### **7.7.2     *Statements 2 and 3: Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother; Children have too much impact on the freedom of the father***

NLC statements two and three are derived from Q8c of the ISSP module, *Having children interferes too much with the freedom of the parents* (ISSA 1994; T.W. Smith, personal communication, 2001). In NLC the ISSP statement is split into two, covering the mother and father separately. The phrase ‘having children interferes too much with’ is replaced by ‘children have too much impact on’. Evans confirms that ‘Items 2 and 3 appear to be clones of a single ISSP item about the freedom of the parents. This item...was designed to measure the force of the post-materialist yearning for personal freedom as an anti-children force’ (M. Evans, personal communication, 2001). In the discussion of the WOC interview questions, these statements are discussed together because of their similarity.

Statement 2 poses considerable difficulty for over half of the respondents (15 of 27). The difficulties mainly originate from the wording of the statement: the personal/general dilemma, the implied basis for comparison, and the need for clarification and repetition. Fewer respondents (10 of 27) had problems with Statement 3, compared with Statement 2. Because of the similarity in the statements, it may be that respondents had already voiced their difficulties in relation to Statement 2. Marilyn, for example, answers Statement 3 quite directly, whereas the interaction over Statement 2 is lengthy.

For Statement 2, 12 of the 27 interviews (Andrea, Annegret, Chrissy, Coral, Debra, Karen, Kerry, Lindy, Lyn, Sonya, Tina, and Tonia) appears to pose no difficulty for the respondent; that is, they answer without asking for repetition or clarification and have no obvious problems with the statement. Nine of the 27 asked for repetition or clarification; nine had other difficulties (three of these also asked for repetition or clarification).

Requests for repetition may not be so serious a problem, as the mode of the interview may account for many of these requests. Requests for clarification reveal other kinds of problems. Carol (Segment 7.13) and seven others (Merilyn, Dale, Kristen, Noelle, Edith, Nadia and Beverly) gave qualified answers:

### Segment 7.13 Carol (Agree/Disagree)

132. Int:                ah (.) children have too great an impact on the  
 133.                       freedom of the mother. do you strongly agree, agree,  
 134.                       disagree, or strongly disagree  
 135. Carol:            ↑oh=↑i'd ↑disagree. to a certain extent,=i mean they  
 136.                       do impact but (.) that's the choice that you make.  
 137.                       when you have them. ((Annie goes to the next statement))

[MMPH#15:132-7]

Annie delivers the statement with stress on too. Carol's initial response is '↑oh=↑I'd ↑disagree.' However, she expands on her answer, providing explanation. Annie does not allow this expansion to alter Carol's response; she withholds acknowledgment and goes straight on to the next statement, and 'disagree' is circled on the questionnaire. When Carol disagrees, it seems that she disagrees with 'too great an impact': she says that children have an impact on the mother's freedom, but that because 'you' make a choice 'when you have them', this impact cannot be considered too great.

In over half of the interviews (15 of 27), however, the interaction in negotiating a response to this statement was more complex than in Carol's interview. Some respondents asked for repetition or clarification (Beverly, Dale, Jenny, Jess, Kristen, Liz, Melinda, Merilyn, and Ricky); and, in some cases, despite repetition or clarification, the respondent and Annie had considerable difficulty in achieving an acceptable response (Beverly, Edith, Helen, Joanne, Kristen, Liz, Merilyn, Noelle).

Beverly, a woman with no children, voices doubt about the wording of Statement 2:

### Segment 7.14 Beverly (Disagree/Disagree)

71. Int:                children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
 72.                       the mother. do you strongly agree, agree,  
 73.                       disagree, or strongly disagree.  
 74. Beverly:            !t (0.3) ah heck (0.3) what- what are the choices  
 75.                       again?  
 76. Int:                [>sorry<  
 77. Beverly:            [strongly  
 78. Int:                u:m [children have ] too great an impact on the=  
 79. Beverly:            [children have-]

80. Int: =freedom of the mother.  
 81. Beverly: right,  
 82. Int: do: you:: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or  
 83. strongly disagree.  
 84. Beverly: ↑a::hhh (2.3) i mean it all just depends so much on  
 85. what- !t ↑ah i don't think that's (.) what you need  
 86. the answer to that question- to answer that question.  
 87. ↑yeah. children have,  
 88. Int: too great an impa[ct  
 89. Beverly: [too gr- too great an impact.  
 90. Int: >°on the free[dom of the mother°<  
 91. Beverly: [freedom °of the mother.° (1.0) ↑u::m (2.0)  
 92. i probly:: hhh (2.0) ·hh  
 93. Int: i mean if you=  
 94. Beverly: =i disagree. but not strongly. [yeah. ] yes.=  
 95. Int: [and the next-]  
 96. Beverly: =okay?

[MMPH#25:71-96]

Beverly doubts that this wording will result in the correct answer to the question:  
 ↑a::hhh (2.3) i mean it all just depends so much on what- !t ↑ah i don't think that's (.)  
 what you need the answer to that question- to answer that question. ↑yeah.' The  
 interaction is prolonged by Beverly's hedged qualification and quibbling (lines 84-7).

Joanne's confusion about Statement 1 continues in the interaction over Statement 2:

### Segment 7.15 Joanne (Disagree/Disagree)

174. Int: °↑now° children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
 175. the mother. do you [strongly agree, °agree [d ] disagree=  
 176. Joanne: [ahh ] [t!]  
 177. Int: =or strongly disagree°  
 178. (1.3)  
 179. Joanne: oh. dear. (1.3) this all goes back to this confusion.  
 180. because (our views are such-) ↑u:m (1.6) no. <i don't  
 181. really>  
 182. Int: disagree.  
 183. Joanne: i think=↑yeah

[MMPH#10:174-83]

Joanne gives various signals of trouble in her pauses and partial answers. Annie adopts directive behaviour to obtain a response, suggesting 'disagree.' after Joanne's 'no. <I don't really>'. She starts to talk about the confusion in views: 'oh. dear. (1.3) this all goes back to this confusion. because (our views are such-)'. It seems that she is referring to her confusion with Statement 1, where she found the negative in the statement confusing in combination with the negative response options. Annie goes on to the next statement after rather weak hedged confirmation from Joanne, preceded by a hedging phrase, 'i think'.



Melinda and Jenny (not shown) ask for repetition and disagree with the statement. Their interviews also suggest difficulty with the wording of the statement rather than a simple repetition. Helen goes further in attempting to verbalise a difficulty:

#### Segment 7.16 Helen (Agree/Disagree)

173. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
 174. the mother. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree,  
 175. or strongly disagree with that statement.=  
 176. Helen: =now say that again=they have too big an impact (.)  
 177. on the freedom- ((1.6 ) ) what. not-  
 178. her not (.) having- (.) (of the mother) freedom? or  
 179. [having- ]  
 180. Int: [yes. ] [they have too great an=  
 181. Helen: [yeah  
 182. Int: =impact on (°the freedom of the mother°)  
 183. Helen: no i- well i- no i disagree with that.  
 184. Int: (°  
 185. [ ]°) so (.) would you=  
 186. Helen: [no]  
 187. Int: =say you disagree, or strongly disagree.  
 188. Helen: i just disagree.

[MMPH#22:173–88]

Helen's answer seems to centre around the basis for comparison implied in the statement—whether the statement relates to the mother not having freedom or having something else: 'what. not- her not (.) having- (.) (of the mother) freedom? or having-'.

Edith's answer (Segment 7.17): 'it's a bit hard. nowadays, ·hh um-' shows the possibility of a different comparison—between 'nowadays' and some time before:

#### Segment 7.17 Edith (Strongly agree/Agree)

156. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
 157. the mother. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree,  
 158. or strongly disagree.  
 159. Edith: <too great an impact.> (1.0) on the freedom. (2.0)  
 160. °they do have a big impact° ((faint, almost innocent,  
 161. thoughtful))  
 162. Int: °so (.) children have too great an impact on the  
 163. freedom of the mother° ([do you strong-)  
 164. Edith: [it's a bit hard. nowadays,  
 165. ·hh um-  
 166. Int: ( ) ((was  
 167. she really talking here?))  
 168. Edith: yeah. i do.=i- i a-(°gree.°)  
 169. Int: do you strongly agree or agree  
 170. Edith: (°oh just agree°)

[MMPH#17:156–70]

Edith's musings around the statement suggest a focus on freedom, with her quick delivery of '<too great an impact>' and her stress on 'freedom'.

Apart from a different basis for comparison, a second problem is made obvious from the segments shown to this point. Dale's (not shown) and Edith's interviews show a difficulty with 'too'. As well as implying a comparison, 'too' carries a further implication: 'too great an impact *for what?*'. 'Too great' implies that some limit has been exceeded. However, because the statement does not specify which particular limit applies here, the respondent is left to interpret it as she sees fit. Does it mean 'too great an impact to make it worthwhile having children' or 'too great an impact for the mother's wellbeing' or 'too great an impact for the good of the children' or 'of the couple' or even 'too great an impact on the freedom of the mother to work'? Examining the responses of a larger number of respondents might reveal further interpretations. The problem, however, is not that respondents have different interpretations, but how these interpretations are considered in the analysis of the results of the survey. Did the researchers have in mind a particular interpretation? Or is the statement intended to be as vague as possible to allow different interpretations? As part of an attitude scale, the meaning of each statement does not stand alone. However, if the meaning of the statement is interpreted differently by respondents, what respondents are agreeing or disagreeing with will be unclear and measurement will be compromised.

Kristen has great difficulty grasping the meaning of Statement 2. She asks repeatedly for clarification:

#### Segment 7.18 Kristen (Disagree/Disagree)

201. Int: =now the next question is, children have too - >sorry  
202. the next statement< children have too great an impact  
203. on the freedom of the mother. do you strongly agree,  
204. a[gree,  
205. Kristen: [ah what does that mean. like==  
206. Int: =>children have< too much impact °on the freedom of  
207. the mother°  
208. (1.0)  
209. Kristen: what does that mean.  
210. Int: a::h so children (0.3) u::m (0.3) t! (0.6) well- if  
211. you- if the- if you have children,  
212. Kristen: mm  
213. Int: they actually inhibit the freedom of the mother. a  
214. lot.  
215. Kristen: what=they depend on me a lot?  
216. Int: a::h so it actually means that you have a lot less  
217. freedom than (°you would have if you hadn't had

218.                °). [like the way the qu=  
219. Kristen:                [↑o::h-  
220. Int:                =the way the=statement is (                ),=  
221. Kristen:                =yea::h=  
222. Int:                =children (.) inhibit your freedom too much.  
223. Kristen:                no:: i don't think so.  
224. Int:                so [now-] would you say you disagree or=  
225. Kristen:                [no. ]  
226. Int:                =strongly °disagree°]  
227. Kristen:                [i- d-                ] i disa- i disagree with that  
228.                one. (0.3) yeah.=cos i think if you're gunna ·h- i  
229.                think if you- really wanted children in the first  
230.                place, (0.6) ·hh u:m then it's- it's not really a job  
231.                it's- you know >the sort of thing< you enjoy doing  
232.                like anything=like if you enjoy doing something,  
233.                [·hh ] then it's not a=  
234. Int:                [yeah]  
235. Kristen:                =problem but if it's something that you've (.) got,  
236.                and you don't know (.) ·hh how to handle it, well  
237.                then it's a different kettle of fish=[like] to=  
238. Int:                [yeah]  
239. Kristen:                =me, i like it because ·hh she fills in my time, and  
240.                she's more company.  
241. Int:                yeah. [°yeah°  
242. Kristen:                [you know than my actual husband is=which is  
243.                good to me, because i think if i didn't have  
244.                children, i think i'd f- think i'd be u:m (2.0) >not  
245.                that i have childre- children for that reason< but i-  
246.                but (.) um i think i get a lot more out of the kids  
247.                than what i do with my own husba[nd=w ]ell=  
248. Int:                [right]  
249. Kristen:                =with both of them really, [·hh=]  
250. Int:                [yeah]  
251. Kristen:                =because (.) they sort of- (.) you know, he goes off  
252.                and does his own thi:ng, and i don't mind that=but  
253.                ·hh they're- they're very good company for me=i get  
254.                the break when she goes to kindy and things like  
255.                that, ·hh so i do get the break=an i've got a carer  
256.                that looks after her, so that i can go out one night  
257.                to: a restaunt >and that< so- ·hh but- on the whole,  
258.                (0.3) um ·hh no, i think it gives me something to  
259.                do=i think you know y- (.) it gives me: (.) i think  
260.                i'd be bored silly if i didn't have kids=i'd- i  
261.                wouldn't know what to do with myself really=i think  
262.                ·hh they sort of fill my lif:e you know they make it  
263.                more fulfilling;  
264. Int:                °yeah°  
265. Kristen:                yea:h.  
266. Int:                but- i mean these sort of questions- (are sort of )  
267. Kristen:                yeah. yeah.  
268. Int:                the next- the next one is, children have too great an  
269.                impact on ((Annie goes on to the next statement))

Of the 27 respondents Kristen shows the most difficulty understanding the statements. Annie does what interviewers are advised to do in this situation, that is, she repeats the question as it is written; however, she makes a change from ‘too great an impact’ to ‘too much impact’, with added emphasis. Kristen still asks for clarification: ‘what does that

mean.’ (line 209).<sup>164</sup> Annie’s strategy of repetition has not produced a response. She stumbles and pauses with several false starts (lines 210–1) before rephrasing the statement again (line 213): ‘they actually inhibit the freedom of the mother. a lot.’ Kristen asks again for clarification with a paraphrase of what Annie said (line 215): ‘what=they depend on me a lot?’ Annie gives yet another paraphrase (line 216–22), and in the process defines the basis for the comparison in the statement as she sees it; that is, this statement is a comparison of the freedom of the mother before and after having children: ‘a::h so it actually means that you have a lot less freedom than (°you would have if you hadn’t had °).

In line 222 Annie gives Kristen a further interpretation with emphasis: ‘children (.) inhibit your freedom too much.’ even though Kristen’s ‘↑o::h yea::h’ (lines 219, 221) indicates that she has received a version of the question that contains relevant information.<sup>165</sup> However, even though Kristen gives an answer ‘no: I don’t think so.’ her answer is not framed in terms of the response options. Annie gives her a choice of two of the four response options: ‘so now- would you say you disagree or strongly °disagree°. Kristen’s ‘i disagree with that one.’ is convincing, with syllable stress and falling final intonation.

Kristen’s interview highlights the personal/general dilemma also. Annie introduced the pronoun ‘you’ (line 216), an ambiguous pronoun that can refer either to only one person, in this instance Kristen, or can be taken as a general indefinite pronoun meaning ‘a person’ or ‘everybody.’ Using ‘you’ is ‘a very good term for attempting to build ambiguity’ (Sacks 1995:Vol.1, p.165). Sacks says: ‘The openness of the plural “you” means that “you” can in fact be a way of talking about “everybody” —and indeed, incidentally, of “me” (Sacks 1995:Vol.1, p.166). Such use of ‘you’ can be ‘quite powerful’. In response to such attitude statements ‘you’ can cover the general and the personal. When ‘you’ is introduced by Annie, it gets her out of a tight spot in avoiding having to specify whether the statement should be personal or general.

---

<sup>164</sup> Payne (1951:14) comments: ‘Incidentally, one of the pre-tester’s most useful devices is the follow-up question: *What do you mean by that?*’.

<sup>165</sup> Heritage (1984a) shows that recipients confirm with ‘oh’ that, although they were previously uninformed on the matter at hand, they are now informed. See Chapter 3 Section 3.2.1.

The first part of Kristen's expanded answer (lines 227–37) uses the ambiguous pronoun, 'you'. However, in line 242 she switches to speaking personally, using the pronouns 'I', 'me' and 'my'. This makes it difficult to interpret her response. Is she speaking about a general situation or about her own situation? Statement 2 appeared at first glance not to raise the issue raised by Statement 1, that is, whether respondents would interpret it personally or as a general statement about any person, but it is clear that this difficulty still arises.

Even though Annie has Kristen's response at line 227, after about 13 turns of talk, the interaction on this question is prolonged by Kristen's expansion of her turns. That is, although the question–answer sequence is completed, the answer is expanded, leading to further interaction related to this question–answer sequence. Annie asked the question again in lines 224–6; she moves on to the next statement only at line 269. Kristen demonstrates here how effectively she can keep her turn. The strategies she uses to prolong the interaction are used throughout the interview, making it by far the longest of the WOC interviews (nearly 20 minutes compared to the next longest of nearly 10 minutes). Interestingly (because it is an unusual practice for an interviewer conscious of the time constraints operating in a standardised interview), Annie collaborates in allowing Kristen to continue through her use of continuers—'yeah' and 'right'—in lines 234, 238, 241, 248, 250, and 264.

It is clear that the wording of the question causes considerable problems in this interview. Payne (1951:115) comments:

Survey questions should ideally be geared to embrace all levels of understanding so that they have the same meaning for everyone. The obvious means of achieving this ideal is to adapt the wording to the understanding of the lowest educational levels. Surprisingly enough, this can usually be done without giving the patronizing appearance of talking down to them and without sacrificing clarity at other levels.

Transcription of the particularly long interaction with Kristen is useful in making transparent some of difficulties with wording and some of the considerations that such a statement can raise in respondents' minds.

The personal/general dilemma is evident in the interaction with Kristen, Liz and Kerry (Segments 7.19–21). Whereas Kerry clearly interprets the statement in a general way, Kristen and Liz base their answers on personal experience. Annie goes along with

Kristen's personal interpretation, reformulating the statement in personal terms (lines 268–9):

### Segment 7.19 Kristen (Disagree/Disagree)

260. Int: the next- the next one is, children have too great an  
 261. impact on the freedom of the father. so that's the  
 262. same as the one before but talking about the  
 263. fa[ther  
 264. Kristen: [well (.) she doesn't really see her father  
 265. much because he's out every day, and she's at  
 266. preschool so .hh she really spends more of her time  
 267. with me [.hh  
 268. Int: [so the father's freedom is (.) is not (.) um  
 269. inhibited. [too much?]  
 270. Kristen: [no. ] i do the raising strictly on  
 271. my own. really. [.hh ah- ]  
 272. Int: [°right.°] so with this- th- would  
 273. you say that you disagree or strongly (sorry-  
 274. agree or strongly agree) with that statement, that is  
 275. children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
 276. the father.  
 277. Kristen: no: i do:n't- i- (.) no. in this case .hh it's me  
 278. that does all the (supp[lying]) so:: .hh - it's- (.)=  
 279. Int: [so- y-]  
 280. Kristen: =no- so he actually gets his freedom like a single  
 281. man type o[f thing,]  
 282. Int: [yeah ] so would you strongly disagree  
 283. or disagree.  
 284. Kristen: .hh oh well (.) with me (0.3) i disagree with it.  
 285. Int: (disagree)  
 286. Kristen: °yeah.°

[MMPH#6:260–86]

In reformulating the statement in the negative (line 268), Annie demonstrates the confusion that arises with negative response options. It is unclear whether Kristen's clarification refers to the initial asking of the question as written on the interview schedule or to Annie's reformulation in the negative. Annie adds to the confusion in lines 272–6 by saying 'strongly disagree' when she meant 'strongly agree'.

Like Kristen, Liz answers on the basis of personal experience:

### Segment 7.20 Liz (Agree/Agree)

97. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
 98. the mother.  
 99. (2.0)  
 100. Int: °do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly  
 101. disagree.°  
 102. (3.6) ((phone crackle))  
 103. Liz: .hhhh (hang on while i think back) hhh .hh i- (.) er-  
 104. not too much um- no- um (.) .hh (hang on) a tick (.)  
 105. u:(h)m

106. Int: >°take your time°>  
 107. Liz: i- i agree:: but what is the- next one down from  
 108. agree?  
 109. Int: disagree.  
 110. Liz: no i don't disagree, u:m (.) but i don't strongly a-  
 111. disag-  
 112. Int: you can have in between if you really wish=  
 113. Liz: =u:m no. no- i don't think (you said.) ·hh fully  
 114. agree,  
 115. Int: oh.=sorry.=i'll read it our agai[n].  
 116. Liz: [yes  
 117. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
 118. the mother.=do you >strongly agree, agree, disagree,  
 119. or strongly disagree.<  
 120. Liz: agree.

[MMPH#20:97-120]

Liz had her first child in 1979, nearly 20 years before. The answer Liz gives (line 103) suggests that she is thinking back, perhaps to when she had children, interpreting the statement as referring to her personal experience. Liz has difficulty in remembering the response options.

With Kerry, on the other hand, Annie gives a different clarification for Statement 3:

#### Segment 7.21 Kerry (Disagree/Disagree)

111. Int: (  
 112. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly  
 113. disagree)  
 114. Kerry: oh. well.=i disagree. are- (.) are you presuming- i  
 115. mean- are you presuming that i'll say disagree:: um-  
 116. (.) in (.) favourable circumstances? or- that (.) a  
 117. lot of par- (.) i- or that i would think (.) that a  
 118. lot of (.) fathers would think tha(h)t. or-  
 119. Int: °ri::ght.° it's more like what your general view  
 120. is.( )=  
 121. Kerry: =okay. well i don't agree that it would be

[MMPH#24:111-21]

Kerry's eventual answer 'I don't agree that it would be' is not appropriate as a response to the statement. Kerry is answering a different proposition, a proposition that includes a conditional, 'would.': 'or that i would think (.) that a lot of (.) fathers would think tha(h)t. or-' (lines 116-8). The logical extension of this is 'if', another way of voicing a qualification. Annie mentions again that a general view is sought and circles 'disagree.' From her 'okay.' (line 121) Kerry can be assumed to have taken a general view of this statement.

Some respondents expressed other reservations about Statement 3. Helen's husband was in the room at the time and said that she should speak only for herself. Annegret felt that the question should be directed to the father rather than the mother.

### Segment 7.22 Annegret (Disagree/Disagree)

121. Int: children have too great an effect on the freedom of the  
 122. father.  
 123. (0.3)  
 124. Annegret: heh heh ·hhh· U:M hh (.) this is one which probably  
 125. >you should ask the father rather than the mother,<  
 126. UM, no, i disagree with that,

[MMPH#1:121-6]

The longer interaction between Jess and Annie over both Statements 2 and 3 is presented below because the questions and answers for both statements become entangled:

### Segment 7.23 Jess (Statements 2 and 3: Disagree/Strongly disagree)

92. Int: (° °) children have too great an impact  
 93. on the freedom of the mother. (°do you strongly agree  
 94. agree disagree or strongly disagree°)  
 95. Jess: have too much impact?=  
 96. Int: =yep  
 97. Jess: on the mother >as opposed to the father,< o:r-  
 98. Int: oh well we ask that ([  
 99. Jess: [so tha[t-  
 100. Int: [it says children have too  
 101. great an impact on the freedom of the mother [(and]=  
 102. Jess: [yes ]  
 103. Int: =the next one) children have too great an impact on the  
 104. freedom of the father.  
 105. Jess: oh a::h disagree:.  
 106. Int: disagree. and what about the father.((baby squeals))  
 107. Jess: °a::[h°  
 108. Int: [>you've got strongly disagree, disagree, agree or  
 109. strongly agree<  
 110. Jess: stro- oh hang on=i'd better get him, hold on  
 111. (34.0)((attends to baby))  
 112. Jess: hello::::? huhm huhm ·hh  
 113. Int: you right?  
 114. Jess: yess. fire away=now let's see, the first of them. now-  
 115. just- have too great an impa::ct, [and i said, what was=  
 116. Int: [on this-  
 117. Jess: =it?  
 118. Int: a:h no:w (.) children have too great an impact on the  
 119. freedom of the mother. now do you strongly agree,  
 120. >agree, disagree or strongly disagree<  
 121. Jess: yeah strongly disagree actua[llly probly, ] yea::h  
 122. Int: [°strongly disagree°]  
 123. Jess: they're that- i mean- they deserve everything. i mean-  
 124. Int: °right° (that's [ ] )  
 125. Jess: [mm]  
 126. Int: (°children have too great an impact on the freedom of



127. the father°) do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or  
 128. strongly disagree with that.  
 129. Jess: ↑to:h that's a hard one, °isn't it.° (2.0) because it's a  
 130. very (1.0)(it's a difficult- what's the w- )  
 131. the wording's so critical, (.) because the impact isn't  
 132. just direct.=it's indirect (.) impact. °you kno:w,°=the  
 133. father of this one's off doing lots of overtime  
 134. [for (him)] not=  
 135. Int: [ri::ght ]  
 136. Jess: =direct impact as in [face to] face,  
 137. Int: [i see ] °yep° but that's still  
 138. [( )]  
 139. Jess: [but they-] that's ri:ght=they um- (1.0) i don't  
 140. think they have an undue impact  
 141. Int: so you're saying it's not (direct)  
 142. Jess: mm ye:s  
 143. Int: (i'll put there just indirect impact [ ]  
 144. Jess: [mm]  
 145. Int: [ ] ) ((goes on to next question))  
 146. Jess: [mm]

[MMPH#9:92-146]

Jess is the most explicit of all respondents about the difficulties she has with the wording of these statements. She asks whether the basis for comparison implied in this statement is the impact on the mother compared to the father, pre-empting Statement 3 on the freedom of the father. Jess responds to Statement 2 twice—when it is first presented and when she returns to the phone after attending to her baby. She changes her response from 'disagree' (line 105) to 'strongly disagree' (line 121) when the statement is presented the second time. Her response to Statement 3 is also recorded as 'strongly disagree'. The audiotape is unclear here.

In answering Statement 3, three respondents, Carol, Helen and Noelle, took the implicit comparison to be a comparison between the mother and the father. Helen's answer provoked comment from Helen's husband. Carol gives a qualified 'disagree' response:

#### Segment 7.24 Carol (Agree/Disagree)

137. Int: ↑um (.) children have too great an impact on the freedom  
 138. of the father.  
 139. (1.6)  
 140. Carol: ↑um  
 141. (0.6)  
 142. Int: °do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly  
 143. disagree°  
 144. Carol: ·hh i think i (.) disagree. blurh. ha(h) i mean i th-  
 145. still think women are the principal caregivers  
 146. Int: so would you say strongly disagree or [just disagree  
 147. Carol: [↑mm  
 148. Carol: no=just disagree

[MMPH#15:137-48]

Carol's 'disagree' relates not so much to the intensity of her attitude, but to the fact that her answer is qualified. The qualification relates to the comparison inherent in the statement. It also relates closely to her response to Statement 2, regarding the freedom of the mother. Carol's pauses (line 139, 141) indicate her difficulty in answering this question.

Noelle's position seems similar. Over the background sounds of noisy children she voices an objection to the wording of Statement 2:

### Segment 7.25 Noelle (Disagree/Agree)

133. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
 134. the mother. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or  
 135. strongly disagree  
 136. Noelle: ↓we::ll. (.) they do have an impact, but i wouldn't  
 137. say,- probably agree but not-  
 138. Int: not strongly ag[ree  
 139. Noelle: [yeah. prob- yeah.  
 140. Int: so ch-  
 141. Noelle: ( ) not the r- not quite the  
 142. right wording  
 143. Int: so:, do you thi::nk (0.6) well (.) what would you  
 144. say. ( )  
 145. Noelle: well they do have an impact, and it's- it is a good  
 146. impact and it can be- (0.6.) it can be (.) bad=it can  
 147. (probably you  
 148. things that you want to do, [if that-] if you let=  
 149. Int: [right ]  
 150. Noelle: =them ( )((interaction  
 151. more messy here than i have shown))  
 152. Int: (°just write this down°)(4.0) and what about,  
 153. children have too ((continues with next statement))

[MMPH#14:133-53]

Noelle's response to this statement is not clear. Annie wrote on the interview schedule: 'They have an impact on the freedom if you let them.' She also circled 'agree'. It seems from the missing data that Noelle is answering her own version of the question: 'They have an impact if you let them'. This avoids the issue of whether the impact is 'too great'. Noelle gives an unconvincing 'agree' (line 139), but her expansion from line 141 indicates that she has reservations about her response. Annie's attempts to obtain an answer that fits an allowable response option fail, and she resorts to writing on the interview schedule. Noelle's unconvincing 'agree' stands.

In Statement 3 also Noelle qualifies the statement and answers the question implied in her qualification:

**Segment 7.26 Noelle (Disagree/Agree)**

149. Int:           and what about, children have too great an impact  
150.                   on the freedom of the father. do you strongly agree  
151.                   a[gree-  
152. Noelle:        [well, i think- i think that's completely- they do  
153.                   have an- they do have an impact but- probly less than  
154.                   the mother, (1.0) and (.) once again (if you let  
155.                   them)  
156. Int:           so you say you agree (children have too great an  
157.                   impact-            )  
158. Noelle:        yes.

**[MMPH#14:149–58]**

Noelle starts to answer after Annie's delivery of only the first response option, 'strongly agree.' Annie gives a formulation: 'so you say you agree...', a useful strategy in view of the fact that an appropriate response is not forthcoming. Annie wrote 'less than on the mother' on the interview schedule. Noelle's answer addresses the question of whether they have an impact or not and whether the impact is greater on the father or the mother. It does not address the question of whether the impact is 'too great'.

Merilyn's answer to Statement 2 compares having children nowadays with having children in the past:

**Segment 7.27 Marilyn (Disagree/Disagree)**

146. Int:               ah. (.) children have too great an impact on the  
147. freedom of the mother. do you strongly agree, agree,  
148. disagree, or strongly disagree.  
149. (2.3)  
150. Marilyn:          °oh.° (2.6) just repeat the question¿  
151. Int:                °>sorry<° children have too great an impact on the  
152. freedom of the mother.  
153. Marilyn:          °um° (see we're talking of) different eras  
154. Int:                [°what°] [↑well-  
155. Marilyn:          [whe- ] [i'm ta- i'm talking of me and my children¿  
156. Int:                ↑yeah,  
157. Marilyn:          but if you look at today's era, that's totally  
158. different today,  
159. Int:                yeah=  
160. Marilyn:          =and children don't have the (.) u:m  
161. (0.3)  
162. Int:                (°quality ,°)  
163. Marilyn:          no- no=they don't have the impact on the freedom of  
164. the mother¿ (.) today¿ as what they did those- back  
165. when i had children. i would- i would've thought yer-  
166. yer- idea- it- back in our day was you stayed home  
167. with the child¿ (.hh) and today a lot of mothers go  
168. out to work.=so °that's°=  
169. Int:                =(°right°) so- so is that what you're saying, that  
170. that's something that's different from before=so it's  
171. less impact on the freedom of the mother (than  
172. before)  
173. Marilyn:          i would think ↓so. ↓yes.

174. Int: and as a general statement? °um- you know-° an  
 175. overall statement (.) as general- generally children  
 176. have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother  
 177. (in general)  
 178. Marilyn: i would think- (.) yeah=that would be a general  
 179. statement, °yeah.°  
 180. Int: and do you generally agree with that statement?  
 181. (1.0)  
 182. Marilyn: °oh°° (1.3) °i'm a dreadful person. aren't i.° (.) huh  
 183. [huh ]=  
 184. Int: [NO hhh]  
 185. Marilyn: =huh ·hh ·hh t(h)o do with something like thi(h)s hhh  
 186. huh huh [°huh°  
 187. Int: [that's okay, though, (.) you know,=  
 188. Marilyn: =huh [·hh  
 189. Int: [go with what you um- (.) you know instinctively  
 190. (.) feel about it (°° °°)  
 191. Marilyn: °okay.° as a general  
 192. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
 193. the mother. (what do you generally feel about it)  
 194. (4.0)  
 195. Marilyn: i think i disagree.  
 196. Int: °disagree°  
 197. Marilyn: ye::s ( ) because yea::h ((Annie goes on  
 198. to the next statement))

[MMPH#13:146-98]

Yet another basis for comparison is clear in this interview with Marilyn. Unlike Jess (Segment 7.23), for example, who compares the freedom of the mother with that of the father, and Kristen (Segment 7.17), for example, who compares her own freedom before and after having children, Marilyn compares the freedom for mothers today with the freedom of mothers when she had children. Adopting this comparison does not generate a straightforward response to the question. Annie stresses that it is a general statement: 'and as a general statement? °um- you know-° an overall statement' (line 175). Marilyn does not readily respond, still indicating difficulty in interpreting the statement and blaming herself as a 'dreadful person.' (line 182) The idea of being a dreadful person is the first part of what is continued in line 185 't(h)o do with something like thi(h)s', implying that she is not a good respondent because she is not good at answering the question. Annie's directive to go with how she instinctively feels about the statement also does not seem to produce a response. Marilyn takes four seconds before giving a hedged: 'i think i disagree.'

Three of the 10 respondents who had trouble responding to Statement 3, Debra, Edith and Dale, used the phrase 'it depends' to qualify their answers. Jess's answer (Segment 7.23 above) also shows that she felt that it depended on whether the impact was seen as direct or indirect. In a similar way, Kerry implied that her response was contingent on

some condition being met. Debra said that the impact depended on the individual parent:

**Segment 7.28 Debra (Agree/Agree)**

106. Int: a:nd children have too great an impact °on the  
107. freedom of the father.°  
108. Debra: they do have an impact, ↑um (2.0) t! ↑depends ↑on  
109. ↑the ↑individual. (.)↓parent really. ↑u::m (0.3)  
110. i'll just agree with that. (.)↓yes.

[MMPH#27:106–10]

Edith felt that it depended on how the father saw his involvement:

**Segment 7.29 Edith (Strongly disagree/Agree)**

168. Int: and (.) children have too great an impact on the freedom  
169. of the father. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree,  
170. or strongly disagree.  
171. Edith: too great an impact on the freedom.  
172. Int: ((very unclear))  
173. Edith: ( )  
174. Int: ( [ )  
175. Edith: [yeahhhh ah hah  
176. Int: ah ( )  
177. Edith: ↑no::: disagree, i-i still think °um- um- i- think  
178. they- they-° it depends on what (he- what he-) you  
179. know how he sees his involvement  
180. Int: °sure.°

[MMPH#17:168–80]

Dale felt that the impact on the father depended on other factors:

**Segment 7.30 Dale (Strongly disagree/Disagree)**

152. Int: so (.) children have too great an impact on the freedom of  
153. the father.  
154. Dale: ↑u:m (1.3) no=i don't think it changes anythi(h)ng for  
155. the(h)m rea(h)lly(h)h [heh heh] at this stage anyway from=  
156. Int: [ri:ght ]  
157. Dale: =·hh becau=oh well¿ it doe::s, but um the difference is i  
158. spose the feeding and everything, you know (.) like- um- y-  
159. well it depends on the mother (like) if she's  
160. breastfeeding¿ you know¿  
161. Int: so you'd- you'd say you'd disagree.  
162. Dale: i disagree. yeah.

[MMPH#8:152–62]

Dale disagrees with the statement after Annie's formulation (line 161) that takes the form of a candidate 'disagree' answer. As shown in Chapter 6, formulation is a common

strategy followed by interviewers when it is proving difficult to obtain an answer that fits the available response options. Acquiescence to a formulation is easier for the respondent than disagreeing with the formulation (Heritage and Watson 1979).

### *Summary*

Like Statement 1, Statements 2 and 3 are interpreted by respondents in different ways, largely because of the comparison and limit implicit in the word 'too'. This is likely also to be a problem with the statement as used by the ISSP; however, in combination with different statements the statement may have a different effect on measurement. The statement does not contain any clue as to the logical extension of the comparison. Foddy (1993:162–4) points out that the standard of comparison used in attitude statements should be specified and that problems of measurement arise if they are not. It might be clearer for respondents if the comparison were to be made explicit, as is the case in Statement 5. For example, *Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother/father to make having them worthwhile* or *It is better not to have children because they have too much impact on the freedom of the mother/father*. Rewording might help to avoid the problem of conditional or contingent responses.

Nevertheless, the interpretations of respondents are not transparent. The ambiguity evident in Statement 1 of whether it should be interpreted as a general statement or as a statement to be applied personally is also evident from answers to Statements 2 and 3. Annie's clarification was inconsistent. This is clear from the segments from interviews where clarification was sought or where there was difficulty negotiating a response. As with Statement 1, it is possible that respondents who did not appear to have difficulty in answering also interpreted the statement differently. Like Statement 1, then, the statement itself is ambiguous. Some respondents, like Edith, are considering the impact on a mother's freedom now, compared with having children in earlier times. Others, such as Jess, are comparing the freedom of the mother and the father. Kristen's response indicates confusion between the personal and the general, taking up Annie's explanation that focuses on the mother having a lot less freedom than if she had not had children. These statements were clearly interpreted differently by different respondents. As statements to measure attitude, therefore, they are problematic.

### 7.7.3 Statement 4: *Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy*

Statement 4 *Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy* is an ISSP item that belongs in a larger battery of 'positive affect towards children' items asked periodically in ISSP surveys, probably first in 1986 (M. Evans, personal communication, 2001). It was developed using the usual ISSP procedure: 'depth interviews to elicit topic & word lists, focus groups to extend those and develop question rhetorics, pretesting on small samples to assess statistical properties via factor analysis'. Because this statement was part of a larger group of items when used in the ISSP, it is unclear how the item fits in a different group of items in the NLC unless similar testing procedures are carried out.

Of the 27 WOC respondents, 15 gave responses couched in terms of the available response options, with no qualification, questioning, elaboration or post-expansion.<sup>166</sup> In these cases the interaction usually consisted of a minimal two or three turns. The other 12 respondents took a greater number of turns to negotiate a response. Some respondents asked questions or expanded on or qualified their answers; some had difficulties with the statement and wording. The longest interaction of 36 turns was between Jess and Annie:

#### Segment 7.31 Jess (Agree/Refused)

138. Int: =↑u:m (.) watching children grow up is life's greatest joy.  
 139. do you strongly agree agree disagree or strongly disagree  
 140. Jess: is life's greatest joy?  
 141. Int: ( )  
 142. Jess: t! i would say one of (.) life's greatest joys  
 143. Int: so watching chil[dren] grow up is life's [gr]eatest joy.  
 144. Jess: [hhh ] [ha]  
 145. Int: huh [huh  
 146. Jess: [\$yes i know. it's the wording=i'm terrible with these  
 147. thi[ngs\$  
 148. Int: [NO THAT'S OKAY, °that's o[kay°  
 149. Jess: [u:m (3.0) ((baby  
 150. starting to make unhappy noises)) what's the middle- o:h-  
 151. it's a- it's really hard- i thi:nk these hh HAH HAH  
 152. [HAH ·hhh ] ↑u:m (1.3) it is- well it- i think it's=  
 153. Int: [°huh huh huh°]  
 154. Jess: =one of life's greatest joys=but how can i sort of- i mean-  
 155. [·hh] it is l- it is >i mean< it- ·hhh  
 156. Int: [mm ]  
 157. (1.3)  
 158. Int: well you could agree,but maybe not strongly  
 159. (1.6)  
 160. Jess: yea:::hh=i- (.) the wording then even-

<sup>166</sup> These 15 were Andrea, Beverly, Coral, Dale, Jenny, Karen, Lindy, Lyn, Liz, Melinda, Marilyn, Nadia, Noelle, Tina, and Tonia.

161. Int: yeah. so i can't actually change the wording  
 162. Jess: that's ri:ght. [u::m  
 163. Int: [yeah  
 164. Jess: ↑i ↑mean d- it is. it is. it is.magnificent. (0.6) ·hh °but  
 165. anyway but- it's um- there are other things that are  
 166. magnificent too° ·hh  
 167. Int: (i'll just write here,) one of life's greatest joys  
 168. Jess: ye:s  
 169. Int: ( )  
 170. Jess: °yes°  
 171. Int: ( )  
 172. Jess: °mm hm°  
 173. Int: A:ND i mean you can always refuse to answer any of these  
 174. questions  
 175. Jess: yeah [true.  
 176. Int: [( )  
 177. Jess: yeah  
 178. Int: so (if you want to do that )  
 179. Jess: u:m (3.0) mm (1.3 ) [but that does- it puts you in the=  
 180. Int: [(well you-  
 181. Jess: =position of being absolute  
 182. Int: °mm°  
 183. Jess: when in fact you sort of know it's magnificent but then  
 184. there are other magnificent things too  
 185. Int: well the other thing there is- i mean- ( ) option  
 186. you don't have to leave it out)  
 187. Jess: mmm it is isn't yeah (1.0) t! i'll leave it out.  
 188. Int: okay (well )  
 189. (( clunk - dropped phone??))  
 190. Jess: >sorry<  
 191. Int: >that's alright< A:H- ((goes on to next statement))

[MMPH#9:138-91]

Jess perseveres in her attempt to come to grips with the statement, despite unhappy baby noises, but she finds the task too difficult and decides not to give a response. For Jess, watching children grow up is just one of life's greatest joys. Other things, apart from having children, have been 'magnificent' (lines 183-4). Jess is not prepared to state in an absolute way (line 181) that watching children grow up is life's greatest joy. The laughter initiated by Jess and reciprocated by Annie (lines 143-5, 151-3) works to maintain rapport in a potentially interview-threatening interaction (Lavin and Maynard 2002:342-4).

Like Jess, Annegret finds it impossible to respond to the statement:



**Segment 7.32 Annegret (Agree/Mixed feelings)**

125. Int: watching children grow up is life's greatest joy.  
 126. (.) and again do you strongly °agree,  
 127. agr[ee, disagree, (or) strongly disagree°]  
 128. Annegret: [u::m] i  
 129. wouldn't have said that it was - (.) naw (.) i  
 130. i've >never even thought about whether it was<  
 131. ·hhhhh the greatest joy ↑u::m hhh (2.0) ↑no, i  
 132. don't think it's life's greatest joy=i'd express  
 133. it- neutral i guess. on that one as well.

[MMPh#1:125-33]

Annegret's 'neutral' stance is difficult to interpret. It could reflect Jess's thinking, that there was no single greatest joy, or it could reflect the view that it was a lesser joy compared with others. It does not easily translate to 'mixed feelings,' the label given to such a response. Carol and Edith (Segments 7.33, 7.34 below) both agree with the statement, but have problems with the idea of 'greatest'. Their 'agree' reflects two different aspects of this problem. Carol's 'agree' reflects not so much a diminishing of the joy of having children but, as with Jess, the presence of other joys:

**Segment 7.33 Carol (Agree/Agree)**

148. Int: watching children grow up, is life's greatest joy.  
 149. °do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly  
 150. disagree°  
 151. Carol: ↓oh (.) agree. but >you know< getting your (.)  
 152. postgraduate quals is pretty good,  
 153. Int: ah huh [huh  
 154. Carol: [hh hh  
 155. Int: so was that equivalent to that?  
 156. Carol: ·hh yea(h)h [huh ·hh  
 157. Int: [huh huh [huh  
 158. Carol: [hh hh ·hh  
 159. Int: (10.0) ((either pause or soft talk or both))  
 160. Carol: oh yeah

[MMPh#15:148-60]

Carol, a university lecturer, emphasises 'agree'. She qualifies her response, however: 'but >you know< getting your (.) postgraduate quals is pretty good,' and agrees in response to Annie's question about whether that was equivalent to the joy of having children. Again, not being able to hear Annie's lengthy aside (line 159) is tantalising. Carol's 'agree' reflects a similar position to Jess's decision not to respond to the statement because other things in life also gave her great joy.

Edith and Helen, like Carol, agree with the statement. However, rather than comparing the experience of watching children grow up with other experiences in her life, Edith bases her agreement on the varied nature of this experience of watching children grow up in itself:

**Segment 7.34 Edith (Agree/Agree)**

180. Int: °sure.° (1.0) ↑ah (.) now watching children grow up  
 181. is life's greatest joy. do you strongly agree,  
 182. °agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.°  
 183. Edith: i don't (.) think it's life's greatest joy,  
 184. ( ) (it is a good time  
 185. it is a nice time though (° °) just that  
 186. it can be disappoi(h)nting a(h)t ti(h)mes t(h)oo. hh  
 187. you know, it can be a heartbreaking time,  
 188. Int: mm  
 189. Edith: °↑yeah. ↑it ↑is.° it's lovely watching them grow up  
 190. Int: so as a general statement (you'd agree.)  
 191. Edith: as a general statement. [(i'd agree)  
 192. Int: [watching- yeah  
 193. Edith: yeah

[MMPH#17:180-93]

Edith mentions the many aspects, both positive and negative, of watching children grow up: 'a good time', 'a nice time', 'disappoi(h)nting a(h)t ti(h)mes' and 'a heartbreaking time'. Her statement, 'it's lovely watching them grow up' (line 189) seems to be a summary of the overall experience. When Annie asks 'so as a general statement (you'd agree.)' Edith agrees. Edith's answer highlights the way that 'general' seems to be interpreted for this statement by some WOC respondents. It is not about how other people would experience watching children grow up, but about summarising the overall individual experience for the respondent herself. Thus, an agreeing response is not a comparison with other experiences, but a summary of the respondent's personal experience. As Edith does, Helen, Debra, Sonya, and Kerry talk in their answers about the multi-faceted experience of watching children grow up.

Helen strongly agrees:

### Segment 7.35 Helen (Agree/Strongly agree)

213. Int: now watching children grow up, is life's greatest joy.  
 214. [do ] you strongly agree, agree,=  
 215. Helen: [.hh]  
 216. Int: =disa[gree or strongly disagree]  
 217. Helen: [↑yeah ↑strongly agree, ] it has it ups-  
 218. its ups and downs, but it's more ups than downs.  
 219. Int: (°right°)

[MMPH#22:213-9]

Helen strongly agrees: 'it has it ups- its ups and downs, but it's more ups than downs.' On the face of it, this seems to reflect the same position as Edith who agrees with the statement. Debra also weighs the pluses and minuses and strongly agrees:

### Segment 7.36 Debra (Strongly agree/Strongly agree)

111. Int: and (.) watching children grow up. is life's greatest  
 112. joy. ( ) °do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or  
 113. strongly disa[gree°  
 114. Debra: [↑YES i think strongly agree with that=i  
 115. think it's marvellous. ↓even ↓if ↓they ↓are  
 116. ↓stinkers,  
 117. Int: ah ↑hah ↑hah [hah  
 118. Debra: [\$it's wonderful\$  
 119. Int: mhah hah ·hhh \$okay.

[MMPH#27:111-19]

Kerry (Segment 7.37) and Sonya (not shown) also agree, after seeming to weigh up the pros and cons of their experience. Sonya laughs a lot and says 'so(h)meti(h)mes'; Kerry says 'it has its moments':

### Segment 7.37 Kerry (Agree/Agree)

122. Int: watching children grow up is life's greatest joy do  
 123. you ( )  
 124. Kerry: o::hh wawa::=it can be, ah hah hah hah hhh it has its  
 125. moments, a::h so where would that fit in. u::m  
 126. Int: well i'll read it out again=watching children grow up  
 127. is life's greatest joy, ( )  
 128. )  
 129. Kerry: oh=i'd agree, basically, [yeah  
 130. Int: [not strongly agree  
 131. Kerry: no.

[MMPH#24:122-31]

The responses of Kerry, Sonya, Helen, Debra and Edith seem, then to be an assessment, after weighing up the positive and negative aspects of the experience, of the intensity of their joy in watching their own children grow up. This differs from the basis of the

agreement expressed by Carol, who compares watching children grow up with another experience, that of gaining her postgraduate qualifications.

Joanne questioned the age of children covered by the statement:

### Segment 7.38 Joanne (Agree/Agree)

188. Int: watching children grow up is life's greatest joy.  
 189. Joanne: o::h (2.0) ·hh when you mean children do you mean- at w-  
 190. where does that end. is that (.) when they're adults or  
 191. at eighteen?  
 192. Int: ↑oh ↑i think that's all part of it yeah=[>i mean<]=  
 193. Joanne: [yeah ]  
 194. Int: =i- i don't know. i  
 195. [>(i've got no experience watching children grow up)]<  
 196. Joanne: [yeah i- sta- yeah i- yeah ]  
 197. i spose so yeah  
 198. Int: s:o a[gree?] or strongly a[gree.  
 199. Joanne: [↑yep ] [yeah. (0.3) no=i agree,

[MMPH#10:188-99]

Joanne requests clarification of what is meant by 'children': 'o::h (2.0) ·hh when you mean children do you mean- at w- where does that end. is that (.) when they're adults or at eighteen?'. Annie draws on her personal experience to answer Joanne's question. She steps outside her role as interviewer, saying she has no experience of children growing up. Annie took a similarly personal stance earlier in the interview. When Joanne told her that she had four daughters, Annie revealed that she also was one of four girls. Age also seemed relevant in Kristen's case, as her answer showed. Kristen's answer (typically extended as with most of the interaction between Kristen and Annie, so not shown here) referred exclusively to her pre-school child, with no mention of her adult son.

Beverly, Chrissy and Tina have not had their own children. Beverly and Chrissy disagree with the statement. Tina, on the other hand, strongly agrees. Chrissy hesitates for a long time and finds it difficult to respond:

### Segment 7.38 Chrissy (Agree/Don't know)

102. Int: watching children grow up is life's greatest joy.  
 103. (3.0) °(do you strongly agree agree disagree or  
 104. strongly disagree.)°  
 105. (2.0)  
 106. Chrissy: u::m:: (3.0) i'd- i'd- (2.0) i don't ↑know. (i)  
 107. couldn't answer the ↑question.=  
 108. Int: °that's [(alright)°]

109. Chrissy: [=because ] (.) i've never watched children  
 110. grow ↑up.  
 111. Int: (so- [     ])  
 112. Chrissy: [i think if you were a mother¿ or a parent¿  
 113. you'd probably say ↑yes. but i wouldn't have a clue.  
 114. Int: (°° 7.0 °°)  
 115. Chrissy: mm. don't know.

[MMPH#3:102–15]

Although what Annie says in her extended turn starting in line 114 is not clear, it is clear from Chrissy's answer (lines 109–10) that she has interpreted the statement personally. She has never watched children grow up and responds 'don't know.' Kahn and Cannell observe that problems can arise when respondents do not know the answer to questions. A question that seems straightforward can become extremely difficult to answer as a result of lack of experience, expertise or language (Kahn and Cannell 1957:123–4). Chrissy's trouble with her answer to this statement is demonstrated by her long pauses at lines 103, 105 and 106.

### *Summary*

Two main difficulties arose with this statement. First, the wording of the statement posed a problem for some respondents. The statement focuses on 'life's greatest joy'; this assumes a single greatest joy. For some respondents, to single out watching children growing up as the one 'greatest joy' or ranking it above other great joys was an impossible task. Jess, Annegret, Carol, and Edith articulate this difficulty. These women had achieved fulfilment in a number of other ways, not instead of, but as well as, having children. This statement then does not accurately reflect the intensity of a person's attitude to children. In fact, it is hard to tell from the responses whether a respondent has a positive attitude to children or not. Perhaps it would have been a more useful statement in the past, when most women had few choices open to them apart from having children. Thus, some women, like Nadia, disagree, not because they do not experience great joy in watching their children grow up, but because children are but one of the sources of joy in their lives. Jess articulates this position but opts out of responding because of the difficulty of having to be 'absolute'.

It is difficult to know how to interpret the mixed feelings or neutral position of Jess and Annegret in terms of how they value children. It is clear from their answers that both

women place a very high value on having children, and, indeed, watching children grow up. This is evident from their responses to earlier questions in the WOC survey. Their responses are clearly different from Chrissy's 'don't know', which results from not having watched children grow up.

Second, as with the earlier statements, an issue arose about the generality of the statement. However, it was clear from the 12 non-minimal interactions that most of the women interpreted the statement in strictly personal terms. Where the statement was interpreted in general terms, the respondent seemed not to be speaking for other women but, rather, summarising in a 'general' overall way the pluses and minuses of her own experience, as with Edith, Helen, Debra, Sonya, and Kerry. Much of the way the respondent interpreted the statement was revealed in post-expansion of the response (Carol, Ricky, Helen, Kerry, and Debra). The ambiguity of the statement and the varied interpretations of the respondents meant that the interviewer often behaved in a directive way in order to obtain an allowable response. It was often easier for Annie to record an early tentative response than to take into account the complexities introduced in post-expansion in the hope of a definite response.

Transcription of the interview data shows that the concept of 'general' in this statement can be interpreted in various ways. For example, it could be interpreted as 'general' in the sense of speaking generally for all people or all women. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as 'in general for you'; that is, the overall experience for you of watching your children grow up was your greatest joy. Many of these respondents (Edith, Helen, Debra, Sonya and Kerry) adopted a clearly personal interpretation, apparently more so than with other statements, even when Annie specified, as in Edith's interview, that it was a general statement.<sup>167</sup>

For respondents who had had no children of their own (Beverly, Chrissy and Tina) the statement posed other problems. Asking women who have not had children questions about the joy of the experience of watching children grow up may sometimes be insensitive. This was the experience of interviewers in the 1971 *Australian Family Survey*, particularly if the woman had wanted to have children but not been able to (Australian

---

<sup>167</sup> Laughter often accompanied the women's answers to this statement. Laughter seemed to indicate something about the personal nature of the response (Coates 1996:107,145). See Lavin and Maynard's (2002) discussion on laughter in survey interviews.

Family Survey 1971a). If such a statement is to be included for women who have not had children, it is unfair—as Chrissy’s response shows—to ask them to respond personally. It should be made very clear that this statement is a general statement, not to be taken personally, and to be answered in a general way.

#### 7.7.4 *Statement 5: It is better not to have children because they are such a burden*

Statement 5 is another ISSP item, also used in the 1988 *General Social Survey* (Q818E) in a slightly different form: *It is better not to have children because they are such a heavy financial burden*. Again, the interaction on this statement shows clearly the way in which WOC respondents were confused between the general and personal intent of the statement. No other problems were evident with this statement. Again, the elaborated answers of several respondents (Annegret, Carol, Helen, Kristen and Lyn) support this assertion.

Lyn, Annegret and Carol make it explicit that their response is personal. Lyn asks Annie whether she is talking for herself or in general:

#### Segment 7.40 Lyn (Strongly disagree/Strongly disagree)

136. Int: it is better not to have children because they are such a  
 137. burden. do you strongly agree, agr[(ee disagree )  
 138. Lyn: [am i talking for  
 139. myself or (.)[i- in general.  
 140. Int: [↑yeah talking for yourself.  
 141. Lyn: oh >for myself.< er strongly disagree.

[MMPH#2:136–41]

Annie tells Lyn that she is talking for herself: ‘↑yeah talking for yourself.’ Overall, when asked by the respondent to clarify the intent of Statement 5, Annie’s answer seems to favour a personal response. Her response to requests for clarification of earlier statements, however, sometimes encourages a general response and sometimes a personal view. This is clear, for example, in her response to Nadia’s request (Segment 7.4).

Annegret and Carol make it clear that their response is personal. Annegret says she is disagreeing from her personal point of view:

**Segment 7.41 Annegret (Disagree/Strongly disagree)**

132. Int: it is better not to have children because they are  
 133. such a burden.  
 134. Annegret: no::, i'd strongly disagree with that, i mean from  
 135. my personal point of view,=  
 136. Int: =°yeah yeah that's what i wanted ( °)  
 137. ↑u:m (.) ((goes on to next statement))

[MMPH#1:132-7]

When Annegret says that this is her personal point of view, Annie answers enthusiastically, “yeah yeah that’s what i wanted ( )°”. Annegret strongly disagrees—she has given a personal view of the general statement.

Carol also disagrees with the statement, adding that she is speaking for herself:

**Segment 7.42 Carol (Disagree/Disagree)**

160. Int: ah (.) it is better not to have children because they  
 161. are such a burden. do you strongly agree, agree,  
 162. disagree, or strong[ly disagree  
 163. Carol: [oh no, i disagree. (1.3)  
 164. Int: (°disagree°)[ri:ght.  
 165. Carol: [for me.=

[MMPH#15:160-5]

Although Helen does not explicitly state that she is speaking personally, her answer indicates this:

**Segment 7.43 Helen (Disagree/Strongly disagree)**

218. Int: ↑u:m (.) it is better not to have children  
 219. because they are such a burden.  
 220. Helen: 00::PS (0.3) a(h) hah ha[h  
 221. Int: [heh heh  
 222. [heh heh heh heh heh heh]  
 223. Helen: [strongly disagree with that.]  
 224. [no.  
 225. Int: [·hh \$okay\$ [(um)  
 226. Helen: [sometimes we like to get rid of em but  
 227. (.) you kno:w, [we're lost without em.] yeah.  
 228. Int: [( ) ]  
 229. Helen: °no.°

[MMPH#22:218-29]



Kristen's answer shows a mix of general and personal:

#### Segment 7.44 Kristen (Disagree/Strongly disagree)

303. Int: ↑u:m the NEXT one is ( ), it is  
 304. not better >i'm sorry< it is better not to have  
 305. children because they are such a burden.  
 306. Kristen: mm  
 307. Int: °do you strongly agree agree disagree or strongly  
 308. disagree°  
 309. Kristen: ↑u: m (.) well i thi:nk if you're gunna have  
 310. children, it's gotta - it's >if you like< it's gotta  
 311. be something that you really like doing.  
 312. [it's like=  
 313. Int: [mm  
 314. Kristen: =a job. ·hh if you're not willing to put up with the  
 315. responsibility,=i mean ·hh it's like anything,  
 316. you've- if you don't like something well you're not  
 317. gunna keep with it  
 318. Int: yeah=  
 319. Kristen: =but when you've got kids, you don't have the choice,  
 320. [see ] once you're pregnant,=well i spose you do,=  
 321. Int: [°yeah°]  
 322. Kristen: =if you want to give it up for adoption. [·hh ]=  
 323. Int: [°yeah°]  
 324. Kristen: =and things like that. =but i- (1.0)u:m(.) but (1.0)  
 325. u:m(0.6) but ah (2.6) °u::m° ↑what was the ↑question?  
 326. Int: hhhh=  
 327. Kristen: =heh SO(H)RRY I'M GETTI[N- ·hhh  
 328. Int: [tha(h)t's alri(h)ght, ·hh ah-  
 329. look it's better- it is better not to have children  
 330. because they are such a burden.  
 331. Kristen: ↑u:m (1.2) no. i don't think they are.  
 332. Int: so you disa[gree with that]  
 333. Kristen: [no. ] i mean, everybody has  
 334. their bad points and their good points and that, but  
 335. on the whole, (.) ·hh you know, she's pretty  
 336. good=i've- i've had two good children so=they've been  
 337. (.) both good sleepers and ·hh things like  
 338. that=they've been very good=so [i've got-  
 339. Int: [so you- you wouldn't  
 340. say that it is better to not have children because  
 341. they are such a burden=so you would  
 342. dis[agree  
 343. Kristen: [(clears throat)) no. i disagree with that.  
 344. yeah.=  
 345. Int: =would you say [you dis-  
 346. Kristen: [strongly.=  
 347. Int: =strongly disagree  
 348. Kristen: strongly disagree with that one.

[MMPH#6:303-48]

Kristen again demonstrates her ability to keep her turn, expanding on her views without responding to the statement. Annie collaborates in a similar way to her collaboration in the earlier segment of Kristen's interview (Segment 7.18). She uses continuers that allow Kristen to continue her turn (lines 313, 318, 321, 323). Eventually, Kristen asks for repetition of the question, realising that she has digressed (line 327). Her subsequent

answer indicates a problem in this statement with the negative ‘not’, *it is better not to have children...*, when the answer is ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree.’ As mentioned earlier, a negative in the statement can pose a potential difficulty for respondents when their response is negative also (Converse and Presser 1986; Edwards 1957; Foddy 1993:49–50; Oppenheim 1992:128, 181). Kristen’s response reflects an ambiguous perspective, in that she uses the pronoun ‘you,’ which can be both impersonal and personal. However, as her answer develops, it becomes a clear personal perspective on her own experience with her own children.

### *Summary*

Apart from problems with negatives, few difficulties arise in relation to wording of Statement 5. Again, the main problem in negotiating a response, is the ambiguity of whether it should be interpreted generally, in whatever that sense that may mean, or personally. Helen, Carol, Annegret and Lyn took a personal viewpoint. Kristen combined both perspectives.

#### **7.7.5     *Statement 6: A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work***

Statement 6, *A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work*, has been used regularly in the ISSSA since 1984. In the 1988 and 1994 ISSP Module *Women and Work* it appeared as Q810A. Evans notes that this is ‘the classic item in this area’, developed by Professor Alice Rossi in the 1960s, ‘before proper documentation of these matters was customary’ (M. Evans, personal communication, 2001). According to Smith, it was first asked in the *General Social Survey* in 1977 (T.W. Smith, personal communication, 2001). *General Social Survey* documentation shows that it was used as Q252A between 1972 and 1982. In the ISSS it is part of a multiple-item ‘career costs’ index with documented statistical properties (M. Evans, personal communication, 1996). In the 1994 ISSP module, a self-administered questionnaire, this statement had a different set of response options: *Yes!! Yes?? No No!! A can’t choose* option was also allowed. Other surveys make use of this statement as an individual item: for example, the Urban Institute’s *New Federalism: National Survey of America’s Families* (Wertheimer *et al.* 2001) and Canada’s 1995 *General Social Survey*

(Graham 1997). In the 1998 *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey* (Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 1998) this item was asked as a direct question rather than as an attitude statement: *Can a working mother establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work?*

Like other statements, the major problem in the interaction over this statement in the WOC Survey is that respondents do not want to speak in general terms for other people. Those respondents who 'quibble' with wording or want to qualify their statements see a broader picture that is not reflected in the wording of the statement. The general reaction to the statement can be summarised as 'it depends.' Because this is not an allowable response option, Annie has the task of converting the respondent's answers into a response option with which they feel relatively comfortable, or she must allow a non-response.

Edith, whose reaction is to say 'it depends,' finally agrees with the statement, after Annie reinterprets it:

#### Segment 7.45 Edith (Strongly agree/agree)

198. Int: (°right°) a working mother can establish just as warm  
 199. and secure a relationship with her children, as a  
 200. mother who does not work. (°do you strongly agree,  
 201. agree, disagree, or strongly disagree°)  
 202. (1.0)  
 203. Edith: ↑u:m. i think it depends a lot on the person, and it  
 204. depends on what work- what line of work she's in.  
 205. °really,° (.) i think that- that one's a very hard  
 206. one just to (.) put agree or disagree,  
 207. (1.0)  
 208. Int: um (.) i think the (.) qualifying thing is, like- (.)  
 209. a working mother can establish ( .  
 210. possible for her to establish )  
 211. Edith: ↑well, i- it doesn't really ↑matter, as i said.  
 212. that's a really hard black and whi(h)te question.  
 213. tha(h)t one. [huh huh huh  
 214. Int: [( )  
 215. Int: °um° (.) so a working mother can establish just as  
 216. warm and secure a relationship with her children,  
 217. [as (a mother who does not work)  
 218. Edith: [↑well. ↑yes. some can, yes,  
 219. Int: so (.) um- [i'm trying to say-  
 220. Edith: [some can't.  
 221. Int: yeah=you can say, ( )  
 222. Edith: <yeah i- d- i would-> (2.3) ·hh i would agree. hh °i  
 223. would agree=i mean i- (0.6) well. you know ( )  
 224. )° huh  
 225. Int: °right° um (.) so, ((goes to next statement))

[MMPH#17:198-225]

Edith perseveres in her effort not to be black and white. Recording quality prevents us from observing how Annie reinterprets the statement (line 221), but the interaction up to that point shows that Edith has great difficulty agreeing or disagreeing, as she can see so many qualifications. When Edith finally agrees with the statement (line 222–4), agreement does not come without considerable delay.

Carol tells Annie that she can put ‘agree’ (line 195) but qualifies her answer in so many ways that the negotiated agreement seems meaningless:

#### Segment 7.46 Carol (Agree/Agree)

165. Int: =°yeah.° a working mother can establish just as warm  
 166. and secure a relationship with her children, as a  
 167. mother who does not work.  
 168. Carol: ·hh ↑to:::h. ↑no:. that's ↑a::wfu::l. ↑oh ↑that's a  
 169. ↑really ↑awful ↑question.  
 170. Int: is it?  
 171. Carol: ↑yea::h. it's really unfair.  
 172. Int: (what makes) you think it's unfair.  
 173. Carol: ↑to::h ↑because (.) ↑you ↑kno:w, i mean- working women  
 174. have got enough guilt on them as it i:s. u::huck ·hhh  
 175. ↑LOOK. ↑SEE THE THING IS FOR ME, um=and i really have  
 176. to challenge the validi- i think it's too broad. ·hh  
 177. it DEPENDS. it really depends on the type of work,  
 178. and the HOURS that are put- that- that takes her away  
 179. from the family and the child. ·hh cos i don't think  
 180. it's just quality time=it's gotta be quantity of  
 181. time.=and whether it- she's- ·hh she's engaged in a  
 182. workplace that's got family friendly practices. and-  
 183. and flexibility.  
 184. Int: so ↑when um- the ques- the statement is actually a  
 185. working mother is able to establish (.) just as warm  
 186. and secure a relationship with her child, as a mother  
 187. who does not work,=  
 188. Carol: =ye- de[pend]ing (0.3) on [the nature  
 189. Int: [um ] [ >depending on the nature<  
 190. Carol: of the work.  
 191. Int: would you agree or disagree with this state[ment].  
 192. Carol: [mmm,  
 193. Int: >i mean if it's possible or not possible< °is the  
 194. question°  
 195. Carol: i think it's possible, (.) yes so, you can put agree,  
 196. ·hh bu[t i thi-  
 197. Int: [but you'd want [(to put )  
 198. Carol: [i- i- put in a comment there,  
 199. that it really depending on the nature (1.3) um (0.6)  
 200. of the work=·hh and ↑also the age of the child.  
 201. Int: °yes.°  
 202. Carol: okay?=because i- for example, i personally- i think,  
 203. zero to two, (1.3) ·hh they really should be: y- you  
 204. know, with (.) a one to one parent. (2.3) like- you  
 205. know, in one to one care.  
 206. (2.3)  
 207. Int: (° °) ↑um (.) i've written  
 208. down here, ah- (.) awful question, too broad. hh and

209. [invo ](h)lves quantity (.) ah (.)=  
 210. Carol: [m(h)m]  
 211. Int: =and quality time spent with kids >zero to two years  
 212. old< and (.)zero to two year old °kids° need (.) one  
 213. to one care, [um- and in the middle of that sen-]  
 214. Carol: [·hh yeah- um- >just a minute< ]  
 215. it's qu- it's- i think it's als- it's quantity,  
 216. Int: mm,=  
 217. Carol: =ri:ght, (0.3) um (1.0) like- quantity of time, (0.6)  
 218. also out of s- like. you know they get that argument  
 219. about- you know, that it's quality of time that you  
 220. spend [with] their [kids]  
 221. Int: [yeah] [°yeah°  
 222. Carol: ·hh whereas i d- i don't agree with that,=i reckon:  
 223. that (.) ·hh for a child under three:, (1.0) um (.)  
 224. it's actually quality- ah- [quantity] of ti[me].  
 225. Int: [quantity] [°yeah°=  
 226. but obviously you could include quality in  
 227. [that somewhere]  
 228. Carol: [yeah. ] yeah. yeah.  
 229. Int: (°° °°) [·hh ↑um (.)  
 230. Carol: [no.  
 231. Int: ↑yeah ↑so, >i've written that it involves  
 232. quantity=i'll underline quantity,  
 233. Carol: m[m.  
 234. Int: [(so [ <)  
 235. Carol: [good. [yeah.  
 236. Int: [↑um (.) quantity °and quality° of  
 237. ti[me] spent °with kids.°=  
 238. Carol: [mm]  
 239. Carol: =mm=  
 240. Int: =zero to two year olds need one to one care, and it  
 241. depends also if the job is- (.) is family friendly.  
 242. Carol: mm. yep.

[MMPH#15:165–242]

Carol 'quibbles' with the statement. Her feelings are expressed strongly, with stress and loudness. Like Edith, she mentions many qualifications to the statement and asks Annie to note these on the interview schedule. Annie circled 'agree' and wrote: 'awful qu. too broad involves quantity & quality of time spent with kids; 0–2 y.o. need 1 to one care; depends if job is family friendly.' Some respondents believe that their qualifying remarks will be taken into account. The recorded answers then might be even less likely to reflect the respondents' positions. However, in the NLC CATI interview no such opportunity for written comment was available for this question. Carol's agreement would thus stand unqualified.

Karen's interview progressed quite smoothly until this statement. Karen asks whether qualifications are allowed. The pauses in lines 117 and 118 show that the answer to this statement is problematic:

### Segment 7.47 Karen (Disagree/Mixed feelings)

114. Int: a working mother can establish just as warm and  
 115. secure a relationship with her children, as a mother  
 116. who does not work.  
 117. (1.3)  
 118. Karen: ↑u::m (0.6) can we have qualifications for that?  
 119. Int: [t! ] ah (.) what are your qualifications for that hhh  
 120. Karen: [hhh]  
 121. Karen: um: (.) i don't think a working full time mother can.  
 122. Int: okay,=  
 123. Karen: =but a part time mother could. depending on  
 124. the hours that she works and if she's available to  
 125. her kids.  
 126. Int: °so a part time mother, it's possible,  
 127. Karen: yeah,  
 128. Int: but a full time mother it's not possible.°=  
 129. Karen: =it's not possible, if (.) she:'s going to have the  
 130. kids in full time daycare. you know long hours  
 131. daycare. that's not- that's not possible.  
 132. (1.0)  
 133. Int: ·hh so if you put that in the u:m (.) you know the-  
 134. the range of strongly agree agree disagree or  
 135. strongly disagree, a working mother can establish  
 136. just as warm and secure a relationship with her  
 137. children, as a mother who does not work, um (.)  
 138. should we put that in the middle ([of the )  
 139. Karen: [yeah i guess so  
 140. Int: there's a sort of in be[tween] one=  
 141. Karen: [yes ]  
 142. Int: =(between [(.) ] disagree °and [agree°)  
 143. Karen: [yeah] [yes. ↑yep

[MMPH#19:114-43]

After extended interaction, Karen's response is recorded as 'mixed feelings.' In fact, she does not appear to have 'mixed feelings', but rather strong feelings about the varied ways in which this statement can be interpreted. Her feelings might be better describes as ambivalent (Schaeffer and Thomson 1992:50). If the mother's work is part time, it is possible; if the mother's work is full time and her children are in full-time daycare, it is not possible. Again, as with Edith and Carol, 'it depends'.

Helen, too, has the same reaction:

### Segment 7.48 Helen (Mixed feelings/Agree)

229. Int: a:h a working mother can establish just as warm and  
 230. secure a relationship with her children, as a mother  
 231. who does not work. and again do you strongly agree,  
 232. [agree, disagree-  
 233. Helen: [↑ah (1.3) well i think it all depends on the  
 234. person. =there's a few i know that um don't spend  
 235. quality time even though they work, because they  
 236. (disrupt) the kids; ·hh ↑u:m  
 237. Int: it's a general statement though like- [if- ] if=

238. Helen: [°yeah°]  
 239. Int: =you think about it- if- if it's a possibility that a  
 240. working mother can es[tablish  
 241. Helen: [↑yes ↑yes they can if- yeah i  
 242. agree, to it- yeah- if they >sort of< take the time.  
 243. Int: right. [so ] you think it's still possible.  
 244. Helen: [yeah]  
 245. Helen: °yeah°  
 246. Int: as a mother who does not work. okay.=see so you do-  
 247. so would you agree? or °strongly agree.°  
 248. Helen: oh just agree. yeah. °yeah.°

[MMPH#22:229–48]

Helen shows a reluctance to generalise about the statement (lines 233–6). Her pause indicates her difficulty in answering. Again, 'it all depends on the person.' Here, Annie replies 'it's a general statement though' and reinterprets it by introducing the word 'possibility': 'if you think about it- if it's a possibility that a working mother can establish'. This provides enough room for agreement.

### *Summary*

Writers of attitude statements list one criterion of a bad statement as being a statement that leads respondents to quibble with the wording. This is rather a negative interpretation of what respondents are doing in these cases. 'Quibbling' has the connotation of unnecessary questioning over a minor point: '1. a use of ambiguous, prevaricating, or irrelevant language or arguments to evade a point at issue.' (*The Macquarie Dictionary* 1985:1392). It may be that times have changed since this statement was developed, such that a more complex set of opportunities exists for women. Availability of part-time and full-time work for women and child care in day-care centres are relatively recent changes. Such a statement may no longer adequately express the concept that it is intended to cover. The concepts themselves may have changed. This leads to a different interpretation of the question on the part of respondents such as Edith, Carol, Karen and Helen. Their objections to the statement are an indication of this. Again, in cases where the respondent does not object to the statement and where the process of responding is not transparent, it cannot be assumed that no such difficulties arise. It might be worthwhile for researchers to examine further the issues that give rise to and are raised by 'quibbling'.

**7.7.6 Statement 7: Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother**

The seventh NLC statement, *Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother*, was used in the 1971 and 1977 *Australian Family Survey* (1971b:78) and also in the AIFS 1981 *Australian Family Formation Project* (L. Qu, personal communication, 2001). In 1971, it occurs as item TT in an omnibus of 65 attitude statements with four response options: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. The wording bears some similarity to the 1994 ISSP item: *Having a job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children*. This item was also used in the *General Social Survey* in 1988 as Q810E.

Apart from some small difficulties, this statement seems to work reasonably well. Seven respondents—Carol, Dale, Jess, Kerry, Kristen, Joanne and Nadia—had extended interaction with Annie over this statement. One difficulty with wording led to a question from Nadia:

**Segment 7.49 Nadia (Disagree/Strongly agree<sup>168</sup>)**

123. Int: whatever career a woman may have, her most important  
 124. role in life is still that of becoming a mother. (do  
 125. you strongly a[gree  
 126. Nadia: [of being- becoming a mother? or being  
 127. a mother.  
 128. Int: >i'll read it again< whatever career a woman may have,  
 129. her most important role in life is still that of  
 130. becoming a mother.  
 131. Nadia: ↑um (1.0) well (.) i- i'm sorry to be asking you this  
 132. question, but, (.) i- i find that really con-  
 133. confusing, [is it ] becoming a mother, and falling=  
 134. Int: [(what)]  
 135. Nadia: =pregnant,  
 136. Int: yes. [yes.  
 137. Nadia: [or- or=or or=or- or, does it mean mothering. (.)  
 138. i mean having a child to rear.  
 139. Int: (well i think you )  
 140. Nadia: yeah.=well- ah now- now- um- yeah=what was- (0.3)  
 141. would you mind reading the question again  
 142. [sorry] yeah yeah  
 143. Int: [sure.]  
 144. Int: (that's okay confusing) ah (.) whatever  
 145. career a woman may have,  
 146. Nadia: yeah=  
 147. Int: =her most important role in life, is still that (.) of  
 148. becoming a mother.  
 149. (3.0)

<sup>168</sup> Nadia's response is entered as 'Strongly agree' on the interview schedule (the figure 1 is circled). This appears to be a mistake, as the interview data clearly indicate that she strongly disagrees.





361. Int: her most important role in life is still that of  
 362. being a mother.  
 363. Kristen: oh well i- to me, it's (.) better for me, like i'd  
 364. like to go out and get a job but if the childr- but  
 365. if i'm ·hh pregnant or something like that, well then  
 366. the children come first. [becau ]se they=  
 367. Int: [°yeah°]  
 368. Kristen: [=grow up so quickly.]  
 369. Int: [so- ] if a woman has a career, um  
 370. (.) would you say that (.) still the most important  
 371. thing that- the most important role in (life is being  
 372. a mother)  
 373. Kristen: yeah i think it's (.) more important being a mother,  
 374. Int: °right°

[MMPH#6:349-74]

Even when she repeats the statement, Annie twice replaces 'becoming' with 'being.' Using 'being' does not seem to shorten the interaction over the statement in this case. Kristen appears to agree with the statement (line 373). Ultimately, at line 467 (not shown) she strongly agrees.

Carol disagrees with the statement:

#### Segment 7.51 Carol (Disagree/Disagree)

236. Int: and the last question is, whatever career a woman may  
 237. have, her most important role in life is still that  
 238. of becoming a mother. do you strongly agree, agree,  
 239. disagree, or [strongly dis-]  
 240. Carol: [disagree:::. ] if you're a High Court  
 241. judge, you're gonna go down in history for being a  
 242. High Court judge, [ not ] for being a mother.  
 243. Int: [right]  
 244. Int: and (.) ah- >when you say disagree like that, do you  
 245. mean strongly disagree, or disagree.<  
 246. Carol: no. just [disagree.  
 247. Int: [disagree. (°°okay°°) ↑now, ↑that's the end

[MMPH#15:236-47]

Carol responds in a general way to this statement, using the ambiguous 'you': 'if you're a High Court judge, you're gonna go down in history for being a High Court judge, not for being a mother.'

Dale, as with earlier statements, indicates a reluctance to speak for other women:

**Segment 7.52 Dale (Mixed feelings/Strongly disagree)**

176. Int: whatever career a woman may have, her most important  
 177. role in life is still that of becoming a mother. do you  
 178. strongly agree, agree, disagree, or [strongly disagree]  
 179. Dale: [oh ]  
 180. i'd probly strongly disagree [with tha:t,=  
 181. Int: [°strongly disagree°  
 182. Dale: =>i mean< it's individual choice,  
 183. (2.0)  
 184. Int: U:M (.) that's all the questions=sso that's great,

[MMPH#8:176-84]

Dale strongly disagrees: '>i mean< it's individual choice'. So, according to Dale, some women could agree. It seems likely that she is responding to the statement from a personal perspective, but is not prepared to generalise.

Jess has a very strong reaction to the wording of this statement:

**Segment 7.53 Jess (Disagree/Strongly agree)**

196. Int: whatever career a woman may have, her most important role  
 197. in life is still that of becoming a mother. do you strongly  
 198. agree agree disagree or strongly disagree  
 199. Jess: mm it's couched in such- it's- it's very- i mean i hate- i  
 200. don't mean to be rude but the ·hh [the w-  
 201. Int: [i didn't write the  
 202. questions  
 203. Jess: the wording i- i- i- comes back to clichés, (1.6) but i  
 204. mean i must- being thirty six and having a child and having  
 205. been a career woman all the time, ·hh i'm now (.) realising  
 206. what an absolutely wonderful (.) gift this is, at the end  
 207. of a (.) hard working career type of (.) sscenario, and  
 208. ·hh so: it's sort of strange to then go back to sort of-  
 209. household cliché type ·hh words (like-) i'm- [i'm ]=  
 210. Int: [right]  
 211. Jess: =probably stereotyping myself,but ·hh you know what i mean;  
 212. [it's that sort of-] um- because i ohhh huh huhh =  
 213. Int: [↑yea:h °yeah° ]  
 214. Jess: =probably now after the career i think ye(h)s having a  
 215. child is one of the most important significant things one  
 216. can ever do, HA HA ·hh so i sort of tend to think (.) yes  
 217. cos career is just a career is just as career, t! and a  
 218. life is something far more (.) precious.  
 219. Int: and you're (right in at the moment)  
 220. Jess: that's right.  
 221. Int: (and brand new )  
 222. Jess: yehhhhs <exactly (0.6) that's ri:ght (0.3) °so it's um-°>  
 223. hmm. [↑what was the question again?  
 224. Int: [↑so-  
 225. Int: ↑a:h (.) whatever career a woman may have, her most  
 226. important role in life is still that of becoming a mother.  
 227. Jess: yea::h. i think it i::s.  
 228. Int: so you agree? or stro[ngly agree

229. Jess: [i strongly agree. (1.3) cos you're  
 230. forming another generation in a sort of indirect way  
 231. Int: yeah ( [ ] )  
 232. Jess: [which is- °yeah that's right°  
 233. Int: oka:y, ↑look that's actually the last um (.) question  
 234. Jess: mm hm

[MMPH#9:196-234]

Jess strongly agrees with the statement after strongly objecting to its clichés and stereotypes. Annie distances herself from the wording: 'i didn't write the questions'. In fact, successful attitude statements often provoke strong reactions (Oppenheim 1966:114). Such sayings appear, from the segments above, to provoke explanations and examples from the respondent. This is said to be one of the properties of a good attitude statement (Oppenheim 1966:114). Jess, like Dale but unlike Carol, clearly bases her answer on her own experience.

Kerry, also, qualifies her response:

#### Segment 7.54 Kerry (Disagree/Disagree)

142. Int: ( )  
 143. )  
 144. Kerry: now. the question. does the question mean either or,  
 145. or- um yes hhh  
 146. Int: whatever career a woman may have, her most important  
 147. role in life is still that of becoming a mother.  
 148. Kerry: well=if she has children, as well as a career=but (.)  
 149. not (.) <you know> if she doesn't have a career, then  
 150. obviously her career is, but- hh so then the  
 151. questions sometimes um don't really reflect (.) what  
 152. (.) <you want to know.> hhhh hah [hah hhh  
 153. Int: [i see  
 154. Int: so you're saying that ( =  
 155. Kerry: ye::s  
 156. Int: (= )  
 157. Kerry: oh=i don't think that's necessarily true for some  
 158. women.  
 159. Int: (so you disagree with that )  
 160. okay. that's the end of the questions.

[MMPH#24:142-60]

Annie reformulates Kerry's answer twice (lines 154, 159), the second time as 'disagree.' Kerry does not appear to affirm or deny this formulation, and Annie announces the end of the questions. Reformulation appears to be a useful strategy for interviewers when the

respondent 'quibbles' or qualifies her response, as it is harder for the respondent to disagree than to acquiesce.<sup>169</sup>

## 7.8 Implications

The interaction over the statements in Q194 involved the interviewer, the respondents and the statements themselves. The interviewer's task of obtaining a response was particularly difficult with some respondents and some statements. The respondent's first task of ascertaining which view was expected and then giving a response that reflected her view was similarly difficult in many cases. Both the interviewer and the respondent were constrained by the statements themselves—their intent, their wording, their coverage, the implied comparisons, and their length. Yet, they negotiated the task with humour and goodwill.

For the interviewer, obtaining a response was frequently difficult. Annie managed to negotiate responses in all but two instances, despite interruptions and background noise. Although her behaviour frequently did not conform to the rules for standardised interviewing, she successfully completed her task. She skilfully and sensitively managed 'difficult' respondents, who 'quibbled' with wording, wanted to qualify their responses, kept asking for repetition and clarification, who would not stop talking, and were reluctant to give a definite response. At times, she distanced herself from the statements and the purpose of the researchers and, at times, she overstepped the mark in interpreting the statements for particular respondents. Sometimes, she appeared to be forcing a response, adopting directive behaviour and deciding the response for herself on the basis of what the respondent said. Ascertaining the intensity of the respondent's attitude was often a lengthy task. Mostly, however, she checked the response, and accommodated the respondents' qualifications. She maintained a good relationship with the respondents and several times showed considerable ingenuity in escaping from a position where no response would be forthcoming, writing on the interview schedule to take account of qualifications.

Analysis of segments shown in this chapter demonstrates an important point made by Suchman and Jordan (1990a:236): 'As long as interviewers stop at the first acceptable

---

<sup>169</sup> This has been demonstrated by previous research (Heritage and Watson 1979) and in the discussion

response, the validity problem will never become apparent'. In the case of Q194 an answer in terms of an acceptable response option often came early in the interaction. This answer frequently became the response option.<sup>170</sup> In effect, whatever respondents said after that point was not taken into account. Occasionally, a comment was written on the interview schedule. However, the pattern revealed by analysis of interview data is that most disagreement comes in expansion after an answer has been given.

For the respondents, giving a response in terms of the available response options was often difficult. Sometimes, the respondent did not catch the statement or understand its intent. Did it involve a comparison, and if so with what? Sometimes the statement did not seem to capture adequately the way she saw the situation and she needed to qualify her response. Sometimes, it seemed easier to go along with the interviewer's suggestion or formulation. Respondents with experience themselves in conducting surveys, such as Jess and Annegret, seemed more confident in expressing their views or opting for a non-response. Some respondents seemed to be more aware of nuances in wording than did others. Those respondents who had no apparent difficulty in responding to the statements may also have had similar difficulties, but their mental processes were not transparent in the interaction if they responded with no elaboration. Many respondents felt uncomfortable about being in the position of speaking for others.

As far as the statements themselves are concerned, several problems are evident. Some specific problems arose because of wording. In Statements 1 and 5 problems with double negatives occurred or problems with a negative in the statement followed by negative response options. Some words and phrases caused confusion or a need for clarification: the phrase *too much* in Statements 2 and 3; *becoming* rather than *being* in Statement 7; and Kristen found *impact* hard to understand. Statements 2 and 3 suffered because of an implied comparison. Statement 4 asked the impossible for some respondents, in singling out a *greatest joy*. Statement 6 seemed to take a simplistic view of a much more complex situation, with *working* having various different meanings. This led to 'quibbling' and qualifications. The length of each statement together with the list of

---

on WOC Survey Q167 in Chapter 6.

<sup>170</sup> The segments used in this chapter show that this occurred in Statement 1 for Debra, Joanne, Edith, Marilyn and Dale; in Statement 2 for Carol, Kristen, Noelle, and Marilyn; in Statement 3 for Kerry, Carol, and Edith; in Statement 4 for Carol, Helen, and Debra; in Statement 5 for Annegret and Carol; and in Statement 7 for Carol, Dale and Jess.

response options was hard for some to grasp, particularly over the telephone. This also made it harder for Annie to deliver the statement and response options in one stretch, as expected in standardised interviewing. Because of these problems, it was often hard to know with what respondents were agreeing or disagreeing. Payne (1951:234) advises: 'Keep away from wordings that beg for *ambiguous answers*. A 'Yes' that means "No" is worse than a "Don't know" '.

The most widespread and troublesome problem with all seven statements was the problem of how to interpret to whom they applied. Respondents repeatedly asked for clarification about whether they were speaking for themselves or in general. The statements are worded impersonally, without specific reference to the respondent; thus, they appear to require an impersonal response. However, if the respondent asked about giving a personal view, speaking for herself, this was also correct, in that her view was required to record a response. The interview data show that respondents took either of these positions at various times. When respondents to attitude questions interpret statements differently, problems are likely to occur in evaluating statements in an attitude scale (Edwards 1957:13; Foddy 1993:160–1; Oppenheim 1966:113–7, 1992:128–30). A question preface that clarified carefully the intent of the statement might overcome some of these problems. However, Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000:10) shows that better question introductions do not solve the problem of respondents failing to do what is expected of them. Alternatively, both dimensions could be included as a way of distinguishing personal and general and evaluating how a woman sees herself in relation to general attitudes.

Foddy (1993:160) points out that it must be clear whether the respondents are giving respondent-centred or stimulus-centred responses; that is, do they see their task as measuring themselves and where they stand in relation to the statement or as a request to measure the statement itself? Ajzen and Fishbein (1980:56) stress the importance of ensuring that the attitude measure always assesses the person's own performance of the behaviour, rather than its performance in general. They draw particular attention to the situation of a woman's intention to use birth control pills. Although a woman may favourably evaluate 'using birth control pills', her evaluation of 'my using birth control pills' may be quite negative for various reasons pertaining to her situation at the time.

This problem of ‘personal preferences’ as against ‘normative prescriptions for other people’s behaviour’ is noted and discussed by Jones and Brayfield (1997). Their study on attitudes to the centrality of children for six European countries analyses data from the ISSP 1988 *Family and Changing Sex Roles* module. Two of the three statements they mention (*Watching children grow up is life’s greatest joy* and *A marriage without children is not fully complete*) are those also used in NLC and the WOC Survey. Jones and Brayfield (1997:1251–2) point out:

It is not clear, however, whose situation is being evaluated by such statements: self or generalized other....These statements simultaneously combine personal preferences with normative prescriptions for other people’s behavior. The first item, “life’s greatest joy,” is implicitly more self-oriented than the other two items. The reference person for the second item, “marriage without children,” is ambiguous: respondent’s marriage or anybody’s marriage? ...Therefore, it is somewhat difficult to determine precisely whose personal fulfillment is at stake with these particular items.

In their conclusion, Jones and Brayfield (1997:1264) discuss at length their concern about the fundamental issue of measurement of the centrality of children. Their view is that this construct is more complex. First, the ISSP items do not clearly specify the reference person for each statement:

...they do not specify whose happiness was evaluated by the respondent. For example, a respondent may think that his/her life would be incomplete without children, but he/she may think that it is inappropriate to expect others to feel the same way (Jones and Brayfield 1997:1264).

Second, as seen with the answers to Statement 5 of Jess, Carol, and Annegret, singling out having children as the greatest source of joy in life was missing a complexity in respondents’ real-life situations:

Someone may consider the experience of having and raising children of one’s own as essential, but he/she may also view children as only one avenue, among many avenues, to personal fulfillment. In other words, the threshold of having or not having children is not the only reference point for the centrality of children (Jones and Brayfield 1997:1264).

It may be that this statement worked quite well once, but that life has changed and become more complex for many women combining children and careers (see for example Wolcott 1990). Attitudes have a limited life span (Oppenheim 1992:181). The world moves on, and the same statements may not be related to social context in the same way. Some statements may benefit from re-examination in the light of changes in



society; others may benefit from rewording. As a whole, Q194 would have benefited from careful pre-testing of the set of statements. Selecting individual statements and relying on their performance in other surveys, as items of other carefully tested sets of statements, is clearly problematic.

It is easy to see from the transcription of the WOC interviews how non-response becomes an issue when such statements are used (Jones and Brayfield 1997:1266). Although Oppenheim was referring to pre-testing, his advice is relevant: 'Listening to the depth interview tapes is essential' (Oppenheim 1992:180). Annie's competence and persistence as an interviewer meant that she obtained responses in most cases. However, the way in which she ultimately did this was often directive and casts doubt on the degree to which the responses reflect the respondents' views. The problem may lie in the statement, causing subsequent problems for the interviewer and the respondent. Further problems are likely in analysis of a scale containing such problematic items, but such questions are easily ignored when survey analysts do not examine interaction.

This chapter has analysed the interaction over the set of attitude statements in Q194 in the WOC Survey. The final chapter discusses the implications for demographic survey research of using CA to examine interaction.

## Implications for demographic survey research

---

Almost 30 years ago Cicourel's (1974) study of Argentine fertility signalled major difficulties in the collection and interpretation of fertility data. Cicourel (1974:5) called for examination of the 'interactional and cultural vacuum' in which survey data were collected and interpreted. In particular, he emphasised the need to pay attention to the moment-to-moment perceptions and decision-making of both respondent and interviewer. Since the 1970s the use of surveys for data collection on all manner of issues has increased dramatically, with people everywhere regularly being asked their views in person, over the telephone, or on the Internet. In those 30 years, also, two large-scale international surveys collecting fertility data—the *World Fertility Survey* (WFS) and the *Demographic and Health Survey* (DHS)—involving numerous national surveys, have been conducted. Yet, despite the genuine concern, voiced after the experience of the WFS, that language issues needed to be considered in multilingual surveys (Cleland and Scott 1987; Jemai and Singh 1987; Lucas and Ware 1977; Vaessen *et al.* 1987; Ware 1977; Willis and Pratt 2000), little evidence is to be found that demographers have taken to heart the need to examine the nature of interaction in survey interviews and the implications that this has for the validity and reliability of the results.

This thesis has addressed the concern that demographers pay little attention to the role of language—through interaction—in survey data collection (Chapter 1). The objective was to investigate whether the application of conversation analysis (CA), a method from ethnomethodology analysing talk in interaction, could be of use to demographers and survey researchers in explicating the role of language in survey interviews. To achieve this objective, 10 questions on children were selected for examination from *Negotiating the Life Course* (NLC), a longitudinal telephone survey being conducted in Australia from 1996–2003. A small subset of 27 NLC respondents was re-interviewed in the *Women On Children* (WOC) survey, using these 10 questions. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using the 'high-powered lens' (Moerman 1988:x) of CA transcription

conventions (Chapter 2). Specifically, the research has examined how interviewer and respondent interacted to achieve responses in a monolingual situation. The results of this investigation have far-reaching implications, not only for fertility surveys and other kinds of demographic surveys, but also for social surveys in general, and cast further doubt on many of the assumptions underlying the use of surveys and their findings.

## 8.1 Interaction in interviews

This research confirms for a set of demographic questions what has been established by previous research for survey questions in general; that is, a standardised survey question–answer model—where the interviewer is expected to deliver a standardised question and the respondent to give a codable response—represents a misleading over-simplification of what occurs in practice (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000; Maynard *et al.* 2002; Suchman and Jordan 1990a). In practice, the responses are negotiated through interaction, often more conversational than standardised; the responses can only be understood in the light of this interaction, unique in each interview for each participant. This interaction is found to be subject to the complexities involved in many other kinds of social interaction, where an important consideration is maintaining a harmonious relationship through conversation (Grice 1989). Being achieved through interaction means that the responses to the questions are negotiated turn by turn, with each participant—interviewer and respondent—designing each turn to fit the other through choices made locally in each turn. Also crucial in this interaction is the role of the question, representing the thinking and assumptions of an absent survey researcher and thus creating a three-way interaction (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:47–50; Schaeffer 1991a; Suchman and Jordan 1990a:235,238).

An important and disturbing finding is the extent to which standardisation is an elusive phenomenon across the WOC interviews. Even in the scripted introduction to the survey—where the interviewer’s task was the most straightforward and involved no response from the respondent—it was impossible for an intensively trained, highly experienced, and well-respected interviewer to achieve standardised delivery (Chapter 4). In the light of this finding, it was not particularly surprising that standardisation was also an elusive reality in the delivery of all 10 questions used in the WOC survey. Far more variation in the survey instrument was revealed than was expected. These findings confirm those of other researchers who have examined interaction in survey interviews

using CA (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 2000; Maynard *et al.* 2002; Mazeland and ten Have 1998; Molenaar and Smit 1996; Moore 1999a; Schaeffer 1991a; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Schober and Conrad 1997; Smit 1995; Smit *et al.* 1997; Suchman and Jordan 1990a).

Survey experts and interviewer manuals tend implicitly to lay the blame for lack of standardised behaviour at the feet of the interviewer or the role expectations of the respondent (e.g., Dijkstra and van der Zouwen 1987; Frey and Oishi 1995:109ff). The WOC interviewer, Annie, was on the whole a good interviewer, according to Frey and Oishi's (1995) detailed criteria, and came highly recommended. In many instances, however, it was clear that her behaviour influenced responses. This research has shown directive interviewer behaviour to be, in many cases, a pragmatic approach to resolving a difficult situation, where the respondent's and researcher's frames did not match, and where the interviewer was required to represent the absent researcher and interpret question meaning (Suchman and Jordan 1990a:235,238). The findings of this research, therefore, confirm that many supposed interviewer effects and errors should be seen rather as questionnaire effects and errors (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:13). Annie's reputation as a good interviewer stands.

Directive interviewer behaviour was particularly evident in field-coded questions (Chapter 6), where the response categories were known to the interviewer but not to the respondent, and for questions on attitudes (Chapter 7), where wording and format difficulties led to extended interaction. Directive interviewer behaviour was also evident to a degree in Q165, particularly for women, such as Annegret, whose situation was uncertain and who, therefore, had difficulty in estimating the likelihood of having another child (Chapter 5). The research adds support to the view that interviewers should be allowed to use their discretion to deviate from the standardised approach in the interests of obtaining valid responses (Dijkstra and van der Zouwen 1987; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Schober and Conrad 1997, 2002; Suchman and Jordan 1990a). A more informed understanding of the pressures on interviewers allows researchers a better understanding of their data.

As mentioned earlier, to call the WOC interviews 'standardised' gives a false impression of what occurred. On the other hand, lack of standardisation does not necessarily mean that the responses obtained are problematic, in the sense of not reflecting accurately what the women intended to say. Surveys have to be locally managed, coming down to

the interaction between two people and the question they are dealing with. Overwhelmingly, the rigid structure of the interview schedule and its responses are in conflict with the way in which two people would manage interaction under 'ordinary' circumstances—that is, in conducting 'ordinary' conversation as opposed to conducting a variety of 'institutional' talk. This confirms the work of others, including CA researchers, on interaction in standardised survey interviews (Converse and Presser 1986; Couper 1997; Dijkstra and van der Zouwen 1987; Fowler and Mangione 1990; Groves, Biemer, Lyberg, Massey *et al.* 1988; Hagenaars and Heinen 1982; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1995, 2000; Kahn and Cannell 1957; Maynard *et al.* 2002; Molenaar and Smit 1996; Oppenheim 1992; Payne 1951; Phillips 1971; Schaeffer 1991a; Schaeffer and Maynard 1996; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Schaeffer and Thomson 1992; Schober and Conrad 1997, 2002; Suchman and Jordan 1990a; Sudman and Bradburn 1982; ten Have 1999:Chapter 8).

The WOC research has demonstrated that standardisation is an elusive concept in practice if the social imperatives of interaction between interviewer and respondent are to be met. In particular, the expectation of standardisation sets up a tension between negotiation of responses and allowing the respondent to answer questions in a way that tells her version of the story. However, the analysis of survey data such as these assumes that the interview process was standard (Fowler and Mangione 1990:13–6).

The conundrum this poses is that if interviewers were to be allowed to deviate—as with WOC and NLC Q165, for example—the responses obtained might be more valid. Yet the purpose of standardised questions is also to provide a standard stimulus to achieve a reliable response, where the question is interpreted in the same way by each respondent and in subsequent waves of the survey. The findings of Chapters 4–7 indicate that standard stimuli are an illusion; hence the reliability of responses is questionable. The fundamental assumptions of data validity and reliability are concepts that are seriously called into question in the wider context of the NLC, once interaction is examined, and the way in which responses are obtained and coded becomes transparent through detailed transcription.

This study, then, joins an increasing body of research and commentary that questions the practicality of expecting standardisation to be a feature of survey interviews (Briggs 1986; Converse and Presser 1986; Converse and Sherman 1974; Mazeland and ten Have 1998;

Suchman and Jordan 1990a) or, at the very least, indicates that it is difficult (de Vaus 1995:Ch.1; Dijkstra and van der Zouwen 1987; Fowler and Mangione 1986, 1990; Frey 1983; Frey and Oishi 1995; Gorden 1969; Kahn and Cannell 1964; Oppenheim 1992). Also addressed by this research are the concerns of Bongaarts and Watkins (1996), Briggs (1986), and Cicourel (1974), among others, that systems of communication and social settings in which demographic surveys occur remain unexamined.

In general, demographers' surveys evaluate demographic events associated with changes in population after the fact (Cicourel 1974:9) but what is omitted is an awareness that answers are given and responses are negotiated using the resources of interaction. The research carried out at the University of Wisconsin is an exception to this (Maynard *et al.* 2002; Maynard and Schaeffer 1997, 2002; Schaeffer 1991a; Schaeffer 1991b; Schaeffer and Maynard 1996; Schaeffer *et al.* 1993; Schaeffer and Thomson 1992). In this research using Australian survey interview data, CA has shown in detail the minute-by-minute turn-by-turn construction of responses and the interactional influences on those responses, thus demonstrating the importance of linking the results with information on the interaction and setting of interviews. The research seems to confirm Cicourel's suggestion, in relation to Argentine data on fertility processes, that

Fertility rates, therefore, may be only fortuitously connected with the 'causal variables' described by demographers. Thus the 'causal' nature of such variables may be plausible when examined within the context of the questionnaire's constraints on what members can say to each other (and to researchers) about their activities. The interviews or the questionnaire's accounts about fertility behavior may be independent of the day-to-day activities that produce differentials in the number of live births. The 'causal' chain may be an artifact of the verbal accounts of members and the researcher's coding procedures and methods for obtaining data and assembling tables (Cicourel 1974:11).

## **8.2 Surveys as a way of ascertaining women's views and experience**

Using standardised survey questions to ask women some of the NLC questions about having children, a matter of fundamental importance to most women, resulted in 'bland' information that does not reflect the way women talk and think about these issues. This resembles Freed's (1996:261) finding that, while women experienced pregnancy in very different ways, there was a common thread of conflict and frustration in their narratives, as they were reacting to a set of dominant beliefs and societal expectations that did not match their own. In the WOC survey, women's stories are often unintentionally

censored by the nature of the questions asked and the response options provided. This was shown in the analysis of questions in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 relating to the likelihood of a future birth, the timing of first birth, and attitudes to children. The process of interviewing and the choices of the interviewer in carrying out her task also influenced the kind of information available for analysis. For some questions in the WOC survey it is clear that qualitative research methods would yield more valid responses. This research shows that instances of non-response and 'don't know' represent information lost to researchers; this information may be particularly useful in clarifying why a question does not work well. For example, the 'don't know', 'mixed feelings' or 'neutral' responses to Q194 of women such as Jess or Annegret, whose responses derived from life experiences that made the question difficult to answer, are 'empty' of information to the researcher. In fact, the apparent neutrality represents complex feelings and thoughts that could provide a wealth of information for understanding women's attitudes to having children.

The interaction in the WOC survey interviews stands in stark contrast to interaction among women in other situations talking about having children. Three other situations come to mind: the in-depth face-to-face interviews with three WOC women; personal stories, exemplified by the comedian and columnist Catherine Deveny's (1999) account of her own experience of pregnancy and childbirth; and accounts in popular documentaries, as seen in the 2001 Australian series *Mum's the Word* on SBS television.

*Mum's the Word* presented the proceedings of a focus group, largely comprising women, discussing aspects of having children. Such a program necessarily provides a fairly sketchy overview but provides a striking contrast to the information yielded by the WOC survey, encapsulating the richness and diversity of the women's experiences. As in the WOC interviews, laughter is a prominent feature. The complexity of lived experiences revealed in the detailed answers emerging in the *Mum's the Word* interactions is noticeably absent from survey data on the same issues. This is hardly surprising, given the limited number and 'short-hand' nature of response options in surveys; however, in the light of the difficulty of providing complex and relevant response options, as demonstrated for some questions in the WOC research, further exploration of more popular techniques might be worthwhile.

Researchers are aware of the difficulties of obtaining information from women about important demographic events and their attitudes to the value of having children (Cicourel 1974; Fisher 2000; Jones and Brayfield 1997; Mehan and Wood 1975:49ff). This awareness is supported by research in other disciplines on women's narratives (Coates 1996; Ervin-Tripp 1987; Gilligan 1982; Personal Narratives Group 1989; Richards 1978; Waring 1988); use of language (Fishman 1983; Spender 1980; Tannen 1990, 1993b; Verbiest 1987); use of qualitative research methods (Devault 1990; Oakley 1979, 1981; Roberts 1981); and trial of various survey questions over the years. Women's stories about some events are complex and unique; it is virtually impossible for the response options to survey questions to grasp this complexity. The complexity involved in women's experience of fertility, explored in Carter's (1995) study of agency and fertility, is further amplified here. What CA transcription of interview data reveals is that if obtaining a response to the survey question involves a process that differs too widely from the practice of ordinary conversation, the question is likely neither to deliver the information sought by researchers nor to be a reflection of the women's situations.

Although WOC respondents had their unique stories to tell, it was clear from the data that they also understood the constraints of survey interviews and questions. They rarely persevered in trying to tell their own stories—except perhaps for Kristen, who would have been a nightmare for most interviewers but whose tenacity in holding her turn made sure that her story was heard. If the aim of demographic surveys is to obtain accurate and appropriate information on respondents, more respondent-friendly ways of obtaining uncompromised information are needed. This may mean conversational interviewing, allowing more time, conducting fewer interviews, and trusting a respondent-driven agenda.

Overall, this research has demonstrated the inappropriateness of a standardised telephone survey interview for ascertaining women's views about some of the issues concerned with having children—the likelihood of having children, reasons for timing of a first birth, and the value of children. Asking more factual survey questions by telephone interview appears to be no obstacle to obtaining valid information, although the interaction may not be 'standardised'. However, this study joins a growing body of research that doubts the ability of standardised survey interviews to collect accurate information on some demographic events (e.g., Castle 2001; Cicourel 1974:vi; Francisco



and Pitso 1997; Lucas and Ware 1977; Pitso 1997; Renne 1994; Stone and Campbell 1984; Ware 1977) and attitudes (Jones and Brayfield 1997). This research echoes Jemai and Singh's (1987:172) recommendation on question design for demographic events in the assessment of the WFS, namely that experimental research is crucial if survey methodology in general and question design and content in particular are to be improved. The analysis of WOC questions from NLC using CA transcription is such an experimental study, leading to a detailed insight into how questions work in practice with individual respondents.

Other methods that have been used recently to improve surveys are cognitive interviewing (Tourangeau 1984) or interaction coding in interviews (Cannell and Oksenberg 1988; Morton-Williams and Sykes 1984). Each of these methods has advantages but does not supply the detail on turn-by-turn interaction available in CA transcriptions of interview data (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000:21). Both cognitive interviewing and behaviour coding involve interpretation of observations for each participant separately. CA, on the other hand, by working with a transcription of the minutiae of turn-by-turn interviewer–respondent interaction, gives a total picture of the interaction, showing how interviewers and respondents interact with the question and each other simultaneously. The total picture is only visible through the turn-by-turn development of this interaction. Particularly over the telephone, where videotapes cannot be used, transcripts provide more information for survey designers on many current concerns, including whether questions and their response categories are appropriate, how interviewer bias occurs, how respondents interpret questions, how respondents become 'fatigued', and what factors influence the duration (and therefore the cost) of surveys.

### **8.3 Questions**

The detailed CA transcription of interview data yielded significant findings on how questions worked in the NLC and WOC surveys. Three chapters of the thesis analysed questions: Questions 164 and 165 on current pregnancy status and the likelihood of having a child in the future (Chapter 5), Question 167 on determining the timing of a first child (Chapter 6), and Questions 193 and 194 asking about attitudes to the value of children (Chapter 7). Some questions can be asked reasonably successfully in a telephone

survey interview and some cannot. Asking how many children a woman has, for instance, is not usually problematic, except occasionally in the case of step-children and children of a partner. On the other hand, questions where the answer has to be formulated by the respondent or interpreted by the interviewer in terms of pre-determined response options are often more problematic. There is double jeopardy if both situations occur, as with Question 167 on determining timing of the first birth (Chapter 6).

Not many respondents are needed to see whether a question works well in interaction and, if not, what the problems are. In the case of the WOC questions, a group of 27 respondents highlighted a sufficient number of problems to indicate *post hoc* to the question designers that modifications needed to be made. The detailed CA transcription of interview data revealed much that might otherwise pass unnoticed by question designers, supervisors of interviewers, interviewers themselves, and data analysts—the ‘invisible errors’ mentioned by Cannell and Oksenberg (1988:475). This detail has implications for pre-testing survey questions, interviewer training and analysis of survey data. These implications are discussed in later sections of this chapter. It was clear that, in the responses to NLC Questions 165, 167 and 194, WOC respondents’ own words and meanings were lost in the process of fitting the allowable categories. Above all, analysis of interview data using CA emphasises strongly the need for researchers to read detailed interview transcripts before determining the final questions; listening to interview tapes can identify that a problem exists but may not provide sufficient detail to identify its origin.

Specific findings relate to the demographic concepts that are the purpose for asking the questions, format and wording of questions, use of attitude questions, and new questions. These findings and their implications are outlined below.

### **8.3.1     *Demographic concepts and issues in questions***

It is clear that examining interaction in a detailed and systematic way, even for a small number of respondents, has revealed a great deal about the meaning that women give to demographic concepts and issues in their lives. The fact that many of the WOC women’s initial answers could not easily be translated into coded responses in the survey,

as in Chapters 6 and 7, has important implications. The interviewer often obtained a valid response only by taking into account what occurred after an initial answer had been given, in the process of qualification and elaboration. Their stories, told outside the constraints of such interviews, may have become quite different answers—these answers may or may not have corresponded to the limited number of response option categories available on the interview schedule or they may have led the interviewer to circle a different response option altogether.

Question 165, asking about the likelihood of having a child in the future, was a departure from orthodox practice in fertility surveys, in that it asked women themselves to assess the likelihood of having a child, rather than, for example, whether they would like (Institute for Resource Development and Westinghouse Electric Corporation 1987a; Institute for Resource Development and Macro Systems 1990a) or intend (London *et al.* 1995) to have another child. Demographers would certainly welcome a well-tested survey question that allowed better prediction of the likelihood of future births. Unfortunately, the analysis of this question showed that asking some respondents to attach a probability to the likelihood of their having a child in the future was problematic. Because the question implies calculation of the probability of a number of different processes—including deciding to have a child, finding a partner, becoming pregnant, carrying the pregnancy successfully to term, and having a live birth—some respondents are left feeling overwhelmed and uncertain.

In effect, one question, Q165, is asking a series of questions about each of the proximate determinants that can affect the outcome of a live birth, many of which are beyond a woman's control and defy prediction. Because of this difficulty, the responses obtained from a single question can be misleading. The respondent may address one of these processes alone in her answer—which means that she is answering a different question from the one posed by the survey—and the response cannot capture the complexity of the processes involved in individual cases. The analysis suggests that a more flexible approach might be explored, where the interviewer could ask an alternative or additional question when the initial question is problematic. This would trade off standardisation against validity; yet such a trade-off would perhaps allow the separate analysis of responses of those women for whom likelihood is difficult to ascertain—the women who are in some ways of most interest. It was clear from the transcription of interview

interaction that some respondents (for example, women over 50) should not have been asked these questions about current pregnancy status and having another child in the future.

Analysis of interview data on new or experimental questions (such as Q165) using CA has enormous potential in bringing to light problematic questions before a survey is taken to the field. In the situation, for example, of asking about the likelihood of having a child in the future, earlier, well-trying questions do not go far enough in the exercise of prediction. Replicating questions from earlier surveys is only useful, however, if the question asked captures what the researcher wants to find out. Detailed examination of interview interaction for Q165 confirms that pre-testing a new question is essential, saving a great deal of time and money and preserving the comparability of data from different stages of the survey. Examination of interview data in Chapter 5, then, has been useful in that it will allow future modification of this question or a return to earlier practice.

For researchers of fertility, an important insight arising from the analysis of responses to Q167—what determined the timing of the woman's first child—is the elaboration of the concept of 'planning' in relation to timing of births. The detailed answers of the women who were asked this question suggest that the distinction between 'planned' and 'unplanned' is not at all clear cut. This difficulty, together with field coding and question wording that assumes that determining timing is a conscious decision, made the negotiation of an acceptable response problematic in many cases. The responses negotiated between each interviewer and respondent were the result of that interaction; it cannot, therefore, be assumed that these responses are stable when negotiated in different interactions. In general, it was clear that the survey interview format by which women's answers were required to fit pre-determined response options was constraining to both interviewer and respondents. Much potentially useful information on the factors influencing the conception and bearing of children was lost that might have been gained through different approaches, such as in-depth interviews. This loss of information often occurred for those women whose experience did not fit the response options; as the analysis of Q165, Q167 and Q194 showed, these may be the very women whose experience points to changes in behaviour or new ways of thinking about children.

Using pre-determined response categories based on earlier surveys also seems to be problematic if there has been substantial social change of which the researcher is unaware, or if the question has not been adequately pre-tested. For example, the response categories for NLC Q167 in 1996–7 and 2000 were largely based on the earlier 1971 *Melbourne Survey*. In that thirty-year period, changes in availability of contraception and social support for having children appear to have influenced women's control over the timing of having children. As in Chapter 5 with regard to the likelihood of having another child, analysis of Q167 in Chapter 6 showed a clear divide between responses of women under 50 and women over 50, with regard to whether timing was in fact determined, and hence whether the question, as phrased, was relevant. It was clear that Q167 was ambiguous in asking about two processes: determining the timing of becoming pregnant and the timing of giving birth, and that the response options were often not appropriate. CA transcription of the interview data revealed the difficulties this question posed for respondents. Prolonged negotiation was required to resolve these difficulties. The main difficulty was in giving answers that fitted the response options because of the complexity of the issues of timing a birth and because the question was inappropriate for a large group of women.

### 8.3.2 *Field-coded questions*

This research confirms earlier studies that suggest abandoning field-coded questions in telephone surveys as they are unworkable (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000; Smit 1995; Smit *et al.* 1997). The analysis of NLC Q167 shows precisely how field-coded questions, where the interviewer has a set of response options not known to the respondent, are interactionally problematic (Chapter 6). Over the telephone, without the benefit of show cards or a screen, this type of question almost invariably necessitates biased probing on the part of the interviewer. Obtaining an appropriate response may otherwise be impossible. When the respondent does not know the allowable response options, her efforts to co-operate in providing information become fruitless; this indicates how much respondents co-operate in fitting the categories of response options when they are available (Foddy 1993:182). The validity of the responses to field-coded questions is doubtful.

The already adequately demonstrated unworkability of field-coded questions has implications for other demographic surveys. In the DHS, for instance, field-coded questions are common (Macro International Inc. 1995a, 1995b). The questions in the individual questionnaire asking about reasons for respondent behaviour are all field-coded—reasons for having children, for not using contraception, for stopping breastfeeding, for regretting sterilisation, for leaving school, and for going to a particular place to obtain family planning services. Other field-coded questions include how the respondent determines the timing of sexual relations and what a person can do to avoid Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome. The interviewer will obtain responses to these questions, but, as the analysis in Chapter 6 has demonstrated, whether the responses bear any relation to the respondents' realities is questionable. The primary purpose of the DHS is 'the collection of information of interest to policymakers and program managers', and indicators from the DHS surveys 'provide a yardstick by which program activity can be evaluated' (Macro International Inc. 1995a:v). With such extensive use of field-coded questions serious doubt must be cast on the ability of the DHS to collect accurate data on behaviour.

Fixed choice questions, also called closed questions, where response options are pre-determined and made known to the respondent, also need to be re-examined in the light of the findings about field-coded questions. Cicourel (1974:143) notes that, with any fixed-choice question, the issue of the respondent's own language is never raised.

### 8.3.3 *Attitude questions*

Questions 193 and 194 of the WOC and NLC surveys—a set of seven attitude statements—asked respondents about their attitudes to the value of children (Chapter 7). Once again, interview data confirmed that three 'parties' were involved in the negotiation of a response: the interviewer, the respondent, and the absent researcher, represented by the question. Both interviewer and respondents were constrained by statements that were ambiguous, complex and sometimes too long. The most conspicuous problem for the complete set of statements was the lack of clarity in coverage of the statements: was the response to be based on the individual's experience or was it a generalisation about the experience of others? Although this problem was mentioned briefly in Jones and Brayfield's (1997) analysis of one of these statements, the exact nature of the problem

can only be shown by detailed transcription. Detailed transcription revealed other nuances of meaning and interpretation, suggesting that the responses achieved for some of these statements may not be valid in more than half of the interviews. As shown in Chapter 7, some of these statements have been used in attitude scales in large-scale national and international surveys for several decades. The dangers of using attitude statements in isolation from the scales in which they have been developed—and of even minor changes in wording—are clearly demonstrated.

In the case of attitude statements, Chapter 7 points to the need for more carefully worded question prefaces to clarify what is required from the respondent: a general or personal perspective? Replication of attitude statements is only advisable if the whole set of statements from a well-tested attitude scale is used; because the role of each individual statement is to contribute only a partial meaning, some statements will run into problems if used in isolation. However, detailed analysis of individual statements shows that even in well-tested and frequently used scales, such as those derived from the *International Social Survey* (ISS), individual statements may be flawed. It is clear also that replicating other people's questions or statements is not advisable where significant social change has occurred, rendering some statements obsolete. Measuring social change, the purpose of many surveys, cannot be achieved through such questions, especially if the respondents who might shed light on this change then opt for 'don't know' or a non-response.

The analysis in Chapter 7 shows some attitude statements in Q194 to be socially obsolete. The social reality of women has changed from one where bearing children provided, on the whole, their major source of joy to one where other joys are highly valued, such as work and educational achievements in the cases of Jess, Annegret and Carol. This seems to have been a major source of 'quibbling' and qualification of responses, as the women found it impossible to answer in terms of the statement as it stood. The detailed examination of the interaction shows how much good will and humour both interviewer and respondent bring to such a complex and, at times, frustrating task.

#### 8.4 Pre-testing, pilot testing, and monitoring

The implications of this study for pre-testing, pilot testing and monitoring are considerable. A relatively small number of interviews can yield rich information at a small cost on questions, interviewer behaviour, and relevance to respondents. With the increase in the use of telephone surveys, and the dangers inherent in over-surveying (Dillman 1978:297), the kind of feedback that CA can provide on the total interaction is especially valuable if all stages of surveys are to be as effective as possible. This feedback would be beneficial across the whole survey-taking enterprise and, in the case of demographic surveys, should include such surveys as those for doctoral research as well as more official and larger scale surveys.

In telephone interviewing it is important that pre-testing also be done over the telephone (Dillman 1978:229); the capacity of CA to represent all aspects of the complexity of telephone interaction also has a potential benefit at this stage of a survey. Pre-testing new questions and questions imported from other surveys is especially important with telephone questionnaires where interaction is completely dependent on verbal cues, as demonstrated by the use of the attitude statements examined in Chapter 7. Pre-testing in a face-to-face situation is no substitute because the non-verbal cues used in face-to-face interaction are unavailable in telephone interaction. Thus, for telephone interviewing, use of CA transcriptions in pre-testing is likely to yield different information compared with cognitive interviewing and behaviour coding, where visual cues are important to the analyst's understanding of interaction.

It may be useful also at various stages in the conduct of the survey to check randomly on interviewers and interviews to monitor implementation, as for example with the various waves of the NLC survey at three-year intervals. Recording and CA transcription can be used with interviewers to assess the nature of interaction with respondents and to check whether questions are relevant or appropriate. Such a record will be more useful than relying on memory or a supervisor's interpretation of what occurred in an interview. For the principal investigators in particular, monitoring at all stages using detailed feedback might help to prevent later mishaps.



## 8.5 Interviewer training

This research has implications for the way in which interviewers are regarded in the research process. Interviewer training manuals urge interviewers to behave in a standardised way and yet at the same time urge them to maintain rapport. The analysis in this research has demonstrated that interviewers are frequently placed in a bind by these prescriptions. However, given Foddy's (1993:10) observation that collecting verbal data through survey interviews is likely to continue, the issue of interviewer training remains relevant.

CA transcription could be used to great effect in selecting and training interviewers. Frey and Oishi (1995) list the following as one criterion of interviewer ability: 'Judge nonverbal and verbal cues of respondent so as to know when to administer reinforcement and clarification'. This is one area of interviewer 'ability' where training in relevant aspects of CA research on standardised interviews might productively be used to improve interviewer's sensitivity to what respondents are saying, and to point out interviewer problems in interaction.

The practice of using tapes of interviews in training interviewers might be improved by using more detailed transcripts to highlight the interactional features mentioned in research on survey interviews, such as dispreferred responses and repair. For example, if interviewers were able to recognise the markers of dispreferred responses—pauses, perturbations, false starts, hesitations—they could be alert to the possibility that this may be a troublesome question for the respondent. In some cases, this could mean having alternative questions, as mentioned in the case of Q165 on likelihood (Chapter 5). Similarly, recognising the use of 'well' as an indicator that the respondent is uneasy about some aspect of the question (Schourup 2001) might allow the interviewer to pursue a different strategy.

The principle of preference organisation in the way that question-answer sequences are negotiated in everyday conversation is an important principle also in the way that survey interviews are conducted. Preference organisation provides a key to understanding the reason for prolonged negotiation leading to longer interviews (see analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Survey researcher and interviewers alike should at the very least be given an understanding of how preference works and how the principles of ordinary conversation

influence what occurs in interviews. The problems of directive probing could more usefully be addressed in this context.

Many interviews are extended by the need for interview participants to do considerable work to repair misunderstanding. If this repair work is not done in the interests of maintaining a 'working' yet conversational relationship, the interview is placed in jeopardy. Survey researchers and trainers of interviewers would benefit by an understanding of some of the mechanisms by which repair is carried out and the mechanisms through which rapport is maintained. CA fills the gap in knowing how rapport is achieved in the interview, as shown for example by the way in which laughter operates in interviews.

The role of the interviewer is crucial. The relatively low cost of transcribing a small number of interviews could considerably improve input to interviewers. While in some cases (such as field-coded questions) interviewers are placed in an impossible position, in other situations CA might help to identify strategies that would improve response validity. It is very encouraging for those training interviewers, for interviewers and, indeed, for survey researchers themselves to have the means to examine in detail the interaction on problematic questions.

## **8.6 Cost and duration**

As well as minimising error, survey researchers are concerned to minimise the cost of surveys. This often means minimising the duration of interviews. Transcription of some of the WOC interviews, such as the interview with Kristen, demonstrated the ways in which interviews become long with some respondents. Training interviewers to recognise these interactional phenomena, such as how respondents keep their turns, has significant implications for duration and costs of interviews.

Not much is known, for example, about the interactions and the mechanisms leading to the phenomenon of 'respondent fatigue' or 'respondent burden', mentioned as problematic by some survey manuals (Frey and Oishi 1995:101). These terms refer to respondent behaviour that reflects lack of involvement in or commitment to the survey interview; they imply that the respondent is somehow at fault. The WOC research suggests that respondent fatigue may be less a matter of respondents becoming tired and

more a matter of questions being irrelevant, obsolete, or badly worded, or having particularly constraining response options. An investigation through CA of the strategies used by 'fatigued' respondents, such as quibbling with the question or qualifying responses, might shed further light on this problem. Likewise, not much is known about interactional factors that lead to interviews breaking down; one of CA's most powerful tools is pointing to how communication breaks down.

## 8.7 Implications for multilingual surveys

This study—deliberately monolingual in its focus—demonstrates the potential for using CA to examine some of the difficulties that have arisen in interpreting the data from cross-linguistic and cross-cultural surveys, such as the WFS (Cleland and Scott 1987; Jemai and Singh 1987; Lucas and Ware 1977; Vaessen *et al.* 1987; Ware 1977), where much more than usual attention was paid to linguistic concerns (Vaessen *et al.* 1987:187), and the more recent surveys comprising the DHS, where little reference to linguistic issues is apparent. Even though many of the countries where the DHS has been conducted have multi-lingual populations, language is not a central concern of the methodology and analysis. The research for this thesis addressed only the situation where respondent and interviewer speak the same first language—all 27 WOC respondents had Australian English as their first language. Yet, even in this situation, analysis of interaction data shows that a mismatch frequently occurred between what the question intended and the way in which the interviewer and respondents interpreted these questions.

Vaessen *et al.* (1987:188) noted that the major problem for conducting surveys in multilingual situations does not lie with the questionnaire. The problems of interviewing are far more complex. Analysis of interview data using CA has enormous potential for shedding light on so-called 'interviewing' difficulties, particularly where the language spoken is an issue, and where translators and interpreters are used. The use of CA does not provide solutions, but at the very least it shows how the responses to questions are negotiated, and therefore at which points interaction is problematic or smooth. This, then, has implications for survey researchers on how questions might be redesigned or how interviewers might be trained to use interactional factors more effectively. Factors that influence interaction in an Australian English setting may be very different from

those operating in other linguistic and cultural settings. However, until a clear picture is available to show how interaction proceeds between speakers from differing linguistic and cultural backgrounds, solutions to problems of data interpretation are likely to be elusive.

Given the problems experienced in interaction over some questions between speakers of English as a first language, surveys in which the original language of the survey differs from the first language of respondents are very likely to involve far more complex interactions, complicated by translation and the use of interpreters (Govindasamy and Vaessen 1997; Guérin-Pace and Blum 2000). This particularly applies to such large-scale surveys as the WFS, the DHS and the ISS. Some of the difficulties in making cross-cultural comparisons have been documented in a broad fashion over the last several decades in both sociolinguistic (Blum-Kulka and House 1989; Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989; Briggs 1986; Byram 1995; Cameron 1992; Gonzalez 1995; Hallpike 1971; Harvey 1992; Holzknecht 1987; Knapp, Enninger and Knapp-Potthoff 1987; Moerman 1988; O'Sullivan 1994; Robinson 1984; Savory 1957; Tickoo 1995; Wolfson, Marmor and Jones 1989) and demographic research (Castle 2001; Cicourel 1974; Cleland *et al.* 1987; Cleland and Scott 1987; Hermalin and Lui 1990; Jemai and Singh 1987; Jones and Brayfield 1997; Lucas and Ware 1977; Peil and Lucas 1972; Pitso 1997; Randall 1988; Ross and Vaughan 1984; Singh 1980; Singh 1984; Stone and Campbell 1984; Vaessen *et al.* 1987; Ware 1977; Willis and Pratt 2000; Winn and Lucas 1993).

## **8.8 Implications for qualitative methods**

In its focus on the details of interaction, CA is a powerful qualitative method with implications for broader areas of qualitative research. Studies have called for survey research to be complemented with qualitative research (e.g., Stone and Campbell 1984:27). Studies in demography and anthropological demography, not to mention the social sciences in general, routinely draw on transcribed quotations and ethnographic knowledge to illustrate the views of respondents and to expand findings from quantitative research. Ethnographic data usually refer to other people at other times, removed in time and space from those individuals participating in a survey interview. CA goes a considerable way towards satisfying the need for local-level detail on interview participants.

Some researchers have expressed concern at the practice of transcription (Castle 2001; Coates and Thornborrow 1999; Obermeyer 1997; Randall 1988) which, in general, reflects what is said but not how it is said (ten Have 1999:75–6). After his study of fertility in Argentina, Cicourel (1974:130) cautioned that using quotations to give depth to reports of survey research findings could be misleading. In using quotations researchers are aiming to create sentences that are understandable to readers. Reflecting on his own practice, Cicourel noted: ‘I am creating pauses, hesitations, and topics by the cultural way I present the material to the reader’ (Cicourel 1974:175). Moerman (1988:9) expressed concern about the interpretation of such transcriptions.

The clarity of the CA portrayal of turn-by-turn negotiation has far-reaching implications for the way in which quotations and transcripts from interviews are used in demographic research. A CA perspective indicates very clearly that showing fragments of talk, without showing what goes before and what comes after, cannot adequately portray the way in which responses are negotiated. Without the benefit of the systematic attention to detail that CA transcription provides, it is impossible to interpret such quotations in the way in which they were spoken. For example, when using transcripts, researchers frequently omit the ‘ums’ and ‘ers’ and tend to ‘clean up the mess a bit, by leaving out “noise” considered inessential and by “correcting” obvious mistakes’ (ten Have 1999:76). CA shows that such ‘messy’ and ‘noisy’ features of talk, together with errors, are vital to understanding whether a response is problematic or straightforward.

One of the concerns of social scientists conducting qualitative research as part of a quantitative study, as is frequently the case with demographic research, is how to best identify those who could usefully be interviewed in depth. In the research for this thesis, CA transcription of interview data assisted greatly in the process of deciding who would be useful for in-depth interview (though, ultimately, few of these interviews were conducted). By picking up the small cues that indicated difficulty in responding, transcriptions highlighted areas of difficulty in the concepts contained in the questions and identified respondents for whom the question posed some kind of trouble. These respondents, such as Annegret—whose in-depth interview revealed the complexity of the concept of ‘likelihood’—could then be followed up. The CA transcription refined the process of identification that might otherwise have been random, based on such factors as availability, personality, and distance, or based on a ‘feeling’, rather than on

whether the respondent might illustrate the usual case or contribute some new perspective to the research.

## **8.9 Implications for research**

As well as having applications for the survey process, CA methodology holds enormous potential and promise for research related to surveys in demography in particular and the social sciences in general. While this research has been concerned with a monolingual standardised survey situation, research into interaction in cross-national or multilingual surveys is overdue. This is particularly the case with the dominance of English for many international purposes (Byram 1995; Hayashi and Hayashi 1995; Krasnick 1995; Tickoo 1995). In Australia, for example, it appears that respondents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may inadvertently be left out of surveys because of 'language difficulty'. An investigation into the interview process for non-native speakers, those with disabilities, and those from different socio-economic backgrounds might help extend future coverage of some surveys by identifying obstacles to participation. This could be done for particular groups in the community.

Internationally, multilingual surveys are frequently conducted, as part of the DHS, for example, and complaints about data quality are frequent. Judging from the richness of the findings that CA has yielded for the monolingual situation of the WOC and NLC surveys, multilingual or cross-national surveys at all levels are likely to reap huge benefits from close examination of interaction in interviews. This research can only be conducted by concurrent taping of interviews while a survey is in progress. However, high-quality tape-recording is inexpensive, with the bulk of the cost being incurred in transcription. An interview data set transcribed using CA transcription conventions can be used to examine a multitude of factors associated with the concepts, individuals and institutions that are the subjects of research and the interactional factors that influence them. Even more powerful would be the kind of analysis provided by CA transcription of video material of face-to-face interaction (e.g., Goodwin 1979; Rendle-Short 2002).

For demographers, a closer investigation of current concepts of interest through detailed research examining interactional data would yield rich information. Issues relating to sexual behaviour, the fertility 'decisions' and processes that affect the likelihood of future births and their timing, fertility mishaps, post-partum abstinence, sex preference,

relationship decisions, the effect of education on women's fertility behaviour, 'ideal' family size, migration decisions, ageing, and many more, are potential areas for such examination. CA would provide a way of examining talk about these issues that not only could shed light on interactional factors influencing people's responses, but also could expand demographers' knowledge and understanding of the way in which people think and talk about such issues. This information could be used to refine further the processes used in collecting data. Using CA methods in research on these phenomena would be a powerful means of producing insight into subjects that have eluded researchers' understanding for some time. Ultimately, for demographers, where there is little opportunity to observe demographic phenomena directly, there is no alternative but to listen to how people talk. Because the standardised survey interview with pre-coded questions is so commonly used to obtain information on demographic phenomena, it appears likely that it will continue to be used regardless of the accuracy of the data outcome. Relatively low-cost micro research into interaction is, therefore, crucial in the appraisal of both the effectiveness of specific questions and the overall value of surveys in collecting the data that is demanded for policy and programme considerations.

## References

---

- Abbasi-Shavazi, M.J. (1998). 'The fertility of immigrant women in Australian'. *People and Place* 6(3): 30–8.
- Adeokun, L.A. (1988). 'Investigating the timing of additional children in non-contracepting societies'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.127–45.
- Ajzen, I. and M. Fishbein (1980). *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Antaki, C. and M. Rapley (1996). "'Quality of Life" talk: the liberal paradox of psychological testing'. *Discourse and Society* 7(3): 293–316.
- Atkinson, J.M. (1982). 'Understanding formality: the categorization and production of "formal" interaction'. *British Journal of Sociology* 33(1): 86–117.
- Atkinson, J.M. and J. Heritage, eds. (1984). *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Austin, J.L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Australian Academy of Science (1995). *Population 2040: Australia's choice*. Symposium of the 1994 Annual General Meeting of the Australian Academy of Science. Canberra: Australian Academy of Sciences.
- Australian Broadcasting Commission (1999). *Life Matters: Interview with Professor Audrey Cha and Professor Jan Holm*. 22 March, ABC Radio National.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000). '3301.0 Births Australia'.  
<<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/NT0000BE7E>> (accessed 4 June 2001).
- Australian Family Survey (1971a). *Vol. 8: Reports by Interviewers on Their Interviewing Experience; Reports by Interviewers on Use of the Date Calendar; Comments from the Questionnaire*. Canberra: Department of Demography, The Australian National University.
- Australian Family Survey (1971b). *Vol. 9: Survey Papers*. Canberra: Department of Demography, The Australian National University.



- Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) (1998). *Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing: Interviewer Manual*. Melbourne.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (1999). 'Australia's Mothers and Babies 1997'. <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/npsu/ps9high.htm>> (accessed 30 April 2000).
- Awusabo-Asare, K. (1988). 'Interpretations of demographic concepts: the case of Ghana'. *Population and Development Review* 14(4): 675–87.
- Bacon, J. (1993). 'Techniques for qualitative analysis'. In *Readings in Population Research Methodology. Vol.6: Advanced Basic Tools*. D.Bogue, E.Arriaga, D.Anderton and G.Rumsey, eds. Chicago: Social Development Center, UNFPA, Chapter 24.
- Bailey, K.D. (1982). *Methods of Social Research*. New York: The Free Press.
- Ball, D.W. (1968). 'Toward a sociology of telephones and telephoners'. In *Sociology and Everyday Life*. M. Truzzi, ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, pp.59–75.
- Basu, A.M. and S. Amin (2000). *Some Preconditions for Fertility Decline in Bengal: History, language identity, and an openness to innovations*. Policy Research Division Working Paper No. 142. New York: Population Council.
- Beach, W. (1993). 'Transitional regularities for "causal" "okay" usages'. *Journal of Pragmatics* 19: 325–52.
- Bean, J.M. and B. Johnstone (1994). 'Workplace reasons for saying you're sorry: discourse task management and apology in telephone interviews'. *Discourse Processes* 17: 59–81.
- Beike, D.R. and S.J. Sherman (1998). 'Framing of comparisons in research and practice'. *Applied and Preventive Psychology* 7: 161–80.
- Berg, B.L. (1989). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Berik, G. (1997). 'The need for crossing the method boundaries in economics research'. *Feminist Economics* 3(2): 121–5.
- Bernard, H.R., P. Killworth, D. Kronenfeld and L. Sailer (1984). 'The problem of informant accuracy: the validity of retrospective data'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 13: 495–517.
- Bilmes, J. (1988). 'The concept of preference in conversation analysis'. *Language in Society* 17(2): 161–81.

- Bleck, W. (1987). 'Lying informants: a fieldwork experience from Ghana'. *Population and Development Review* 13(2): 314–22.
- Blum-Kulka, S. and J. House (1989). 'Cross-cultural and situational variation in requesting behavior'. In *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. S. Blum-Kulka, J. House and G. Kasper, eds. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, pp.123–54.
- Blum-Kulka, S., J. House and G. Kasper (1989). 'Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics: an introductory overview'. In *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. S. Blum-Kulka, J. House and G. Kasper, eds. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, pp.1–34.
- Boden, D. (1994). *The Business of Talk: Organizations in action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Boden, D. and D.H. Zimmerman, eds. (1991). *Talk and Social Structure: Studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bongaarts, J. (1978). 'A framework for analysing the proximate determinants of fertility'. *Population and Development Review* 4(1): 105–32.
- Bongaarts, J. (1982). 'The fertility-inhibiting effect of the intermediate fertility variables'. *Studies in Family Planning* 13: 179–89.
- Bongaarts, J. and R. Potter (1983). *Fertility, Biology and Behavior*. New York: Academic Press.
- Bongaarts, J. and S. Watkins (1996). 'Social interactions and contemporary fertility transitions'. *Population and Development Review* 22(4): 639–82.
- Bourdieu, P. and L.J.D. Wacquant (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bradburn, N.A. and S. Sudman (1979). *Improving Interview Method and Questionnaire Design*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bramley, N. (1997). ' "How not to answer a question" revisited: a typology applied to the gendered use of avoidance strategies in Australian political media interviews'. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 20(1): 105–32.
- Briggs, C.L. (1986). *Learning How to Ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Britten, N. (1995). 'Qualitative interviews in medical research'. *British Medical Journal* 311(22): 251–3.

- Brown, P. and S.C. Levinson (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brunner, G.A. and S.J. Carroll (1967). 'The effect of prior telephone appointments on completion rates and response content'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 31(4): 652–4.
- Button, G. (1987a). 'Answers as interactional products: two sequential practices used in interviews'. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 50(2): 160–71.
- Button, G. (1987b). 'Moving out of closings'. In *Talk and Social Interaction*. G. Button and J.R.E. Lee, eds. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp.101–51.
- Button, G. (1990). 'On varieties of closings'. In *Interaction Competence: Studies in ethnomethodology*. G. Psathas, ed. Washington, DC: International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis and University of America Press, pp.93–147.
- Button, G. (1991). 'Conversation-in-a-series'. In *Talk and Social Structure: Studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis*. D. Boden and D.H. Zimmerman, eds. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp.251–77.
- Button, G. and N. Casey (1984). 'Generating topic: the use of topic initial elicitors'. In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversation analysis*. J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.167–89.
- Button, G. and J.R.E. Lee, eds. (1987). *Talk and Social Organisation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Button, G. and W. Sharrock (1995). 'On simulacrum of conversation: toward a clarification of the relevance of conversation analysis for human-computer interaction'. In *The Social and Interactional Dimensions of Human-Computer Interfaces*. P. Thomas, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.107–25.
- Byram, M. (1995). 'Intercultural competence and mobility in multinational contexts: a European view'. In *Language and Culture in Multilingual Societies: Viewpoints and visions*. M.L. Tickoo, ed. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, pp.21–36.
- Caldwell, J., P. Caldwell, M. Bracher and G. Santow (1988a). 'The contemporary marriage and fertility revolutions in the West: the explanations provided by Australian participants'. *Journal of the Australian Population Association* 5(2): 113–45.

- Caldwell, J.C. (1988). 'Micro-approaches: similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.458–70.
- Caldwell, J.C., P. Caldwell and B. Caldwell (1987). 'Anthropology and demography: the mutual reinforcement of speculation and research'. *Current Anthropology* 28(1): 25–43.
- Caldwell, J.C., D. Campbell, P. Caldwell, L. Ruzicka, W. Cosford, R. Packer *et al.* (1976). *Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Demographic Change: A report on semi-structured interviews*. Canberra: Department of Demography, The Australian National University.
- Caldwell, J.C. and A.G. Hill (1988). 'Introduction: recent developments using micro-approaches to demographic research'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.1–9.
- Caldwell, J.C., A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. (1988b). *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. London and New York: Kegan Paul International.
- Cameron, D. (1992). ' "Respect, please!": Investigating race, power and language'. In *Researching Language: Issues of power and method*. D. Cameron, E. Frazer, P. Harvey *et al.*, eds. London: Routledge, pp.113–31.
- Cameron, D., E. Frazer, P. Harvey, M.B.H. Rampton and K. Richardson (1992). *Researching Language: Issues of Power and Method*. London: Routledge.
- Campbell, D. (1976). 'The Sydney survey'. In *Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Demographic Change*. J. Caldwell, D. Campbell, P. Caldwell *et al.*, eds. Canberra: Department of Demography, The Australian National University, pp.29–53.
- Cannell, C. and L. Oksenberg (1988). 'Observation of behavior in telephone interviews'. In *Telephone Survey Methodology*. R.M. Groves, P.P. Biemer, L.E. Lyberg, J.T. Massey, W.L. Nicholls and J. Waksberg, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.475–95.
- Cannell, C.F., F.J. Fowler and K.H. Marquis (1968). *The Influence of Interviewer and Respondent Psychological and Behavioral Variables on the Reporting in Household Interviews*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

- Carmichael, G. and C. Mason (1998). 'Consensual partnering in Australia: a review and 1991 Census profile, Part 1'. *Journal of the Australian Population Association* 15(2): 131–54.
- Carmichael, G.A. (1998). 'Things ain't what they used to be! Demography, mental cohorts, morality and values in post-war Australia'. *Journal of the Australian Population Association* 15(2): 91–114.
- Carroll, D.G. (1999). 'On the precision timing of conversational pauses using computer software'. Unpublished draft via Languse E-mail list.
- Carter, A. (1995). 'Agency and fertility: for an ethnography of practice'. In *Situating Fertility: Anthropology and demographic inquiry*. S. Greenhalgh, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.55–85.
- Carter, A. (1998). 'Committee on Demographic Anthropology: an outline of a new programme'. *IUSSP Activities/Activités de l'UIESP*: 7–14.
- Castle, S. (2001). ' "The tongue is venomous": perception, verbalisation and manipulation of mortality and fertility regimes in rural Mali'. *Social Science and Medicine* 52: 1827–41.
- Cicourel, A.V. (1964). *Method and Measurement in Sociology*. New York: The Free Press.
- Cicourel, A.V. (1973). *Cognitive Sociology: Language and meaning in social interaction*. London: Penguin.
- Cicourel, A.V. (1974). *Theory and Method in a Study of Argentine Fertility*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Cicourel, A.V. (1980). 'Language and social interaction: philosophical and empirical issues'. *Sociological Inquiry* 50(3-4): 1–30.
- Cicourel, A.V. (1982). 'Interviews, surveys, and the problem of ecological validity'. *American Sociologist* 17: 11–20.
- Clark, H.H. (1985). 'Language use and language users'. In *The Handbook of Social Psychology, Vol.2 Special Fields and Applications*. G. Lindzey and E. Aronson, eds. New York: Random House, pp.179–231.
- Clark, H.H. and E.V. Clark (1977). *Psychology and Language: An introduction to psycholinguistics*. New York: Brace Jovanovich.
- Clark, H.H. and M.F. Schober (1992). 'Asking questions and influencing answers'. In *Questions about Questions*. J.M. Tanur, ed. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp.15–45.

- Clayman, S.E. (1992). 'Footing in the achievement of neutrality: the case of news-interview discourse'. In *Talk at Work: Interaction in institutional settings*. P. Drew and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.163–98.
- Cleland, J., G. Johnson-Acsadi and A. Marckwardt (1987). 'The core questionnaires'. In *The World Fertility Survey: An assessment*. J. Cleland and C. Scott, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.31–75.
- Cleland, J. and C. Scott, eds. (1987). *The World Fertility Survey: An assessment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coale, A. (1973). 'The demographic transition'. In *International Population Conference, Liège, 1973, Vol. 1*. Liège: IUSSP, pp.53–72.
- Coates, J. (1996). *Women Talk: Conversation between women friends*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coates, J. and J. Thornborrow (1999). 'Myths, lies and audiotapes: some thoughts on data transcripts'. *Discourse and Society* 10(4): 594–7.
- Collins, B. (1997). Affiliation and the institution: a conversation analytic study of a set of job interviews. Honours sub-thesis. Canberra: Department of Linguistics, The Australian National University.
- Commonwealth of Australia (1994). *Australia: National Report on Population for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development Cairo 1994*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Converse, J.M. (1984). 'Attitude measurement in psychology and sociology: the early years'. In *Surveying Subjective Phenomena, Vol.2*. C.F. Turner and E. Martin, eds. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp.3–39.
- Converse, J.M. and S. Presser (1986). *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the standardized questionnaire*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Converse, J.M. and H. Schuman (1984). 'The manner of inquiry: an analysis of survey question form across organizations and over time'. In *Surveying Subjective Phenomena, Vol.2*. C.F. Turner and E. Martin, eds. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp.283–316.
- Converse, J.M. and H. Sherman (1974). *Conversations at random: Survey research as interviewers see it*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Coombs, L. and R. Freedman (1964). 'Use of telephone interviews in a longitudinal fertility survey'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 28(1): 112–7.

- Cosford, W., M. Neill, J. Grocott, P. Caldwell and J. Caldwell (1976). 'Semi-structured interviews of individuals: the Canberra survey and supplementary interviews'. In *Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Demographic Change*. J. Caldwell, D. Campbell, P. Caldwell *et al.*, eds. Canberra: Department of Demography, The Australian National University, pp.55–115.
- Council of Europe (1998). *Recent Demographic Developments in Europe*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Couper, M.P. (1997). 'Survey introductions and data quality'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 317–38.
- Czyzewski, M. (1995). ' "Mm hm" tokens as interactional devices in the psychotherapeutic in-take interview'. In *Situated Order: Studies in the social organization of talk and embodied activities*. P. ten Have and G. Psathas, eds. Washington, DC: International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis and University Press of America, pp.73–89.
- Davis, J.A. and T.W. Smith (1992). *The NORC General Social Survey: A user's guide*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Davis, K. and J. Blake (1956). 'Social structure and fertility'. *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 4: 211–35.
- de Vaus, D.A. (1995). *Surveys in Social Research*. Fourth edn. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Demeny, P. (1988). 'Demography and the limits to growth'. In *Population and Development Review* 14 (Supplement): *Population and Resources in Western Intellectual Traditions*. M.S. Teitelbaum and J.M. Winter, eds, pp.213–44.
- Devault, M. (1990). 'Talking and listening from women's standpoint: feminist strategies for interviewing and analysis'. *Social Problems* 37(1): 96–116.
- Deveny, C. (1999). *Babies, Bellies and Blundstones*. Melbourne: Lothian Books.
- Dijkstra, W. and J. van der Zouwen, eds. (1982). *Response Behaviour in the Survey-Interview*. London: Academic Press.
- Dijkstra, W. and J. van der Zouwen (1987). 'Styles of interviewing and the social context of the survey-interview'. In *Social Information Processing and Survey Methodology*. H.-J. Hippler, N. Schwarz and S. Sudman, eds. New York: Springer-Verlag, pp.200–11.
- Dillman, D.A. (1978). *Mail and Telephone Surveys: The total design method*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

- Dillman, D.A., J. Gallegos and J.H. Frey (1976). 'Reducing refusal rates for telephone interviews'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 40(1): 66–78.
- Downie, G. (1999). 'Calvary hits Canberra for six in first innings before breakfast.' *The Canberra Times* (2 January): 3.
- Downie, G. (2000). 'Ana arrives at 1.17 a.m. to birth of a century.' *The Canberra Times* (2 January): 1, 2.
- Drew, P. (1985). 'Analyzing the use of language in courtroom interaction'. In *Handbook of Discourse Analysis Vol.3: Discourse and Dialogue*. T.A. van Dijk, ed. London: Academic Press, pp.133–47.
- Drew, P. and J. Heritage (1992a). 'Analyzing talk at work: an introduction'. In *Talk at Work: Interaction in institutional settings*. P. Drew and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.3–65.
- Drew, P. and J. Heritage, eds. (1992b). *Talk at Work: Interaction in institutional settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Drew, P. and E. Holt (1998). 'Figures of speech: figurative expressions and the management of topic transitions in conversation'. *Language in Society* 27(4): 495–522.
- Drummond, K. and R. Hopper (1993). 'Some uses of *Yeab*'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 26(2): 203–12.
- Edelsky, C. (1981). 'Who's got the floor?'. *Language in Society* 10: 383–422.
- Edwards, A.L. (1957). *Techniques of Attitude Scale Construction*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Edwards, J.A. and M.D. Lampert, eds. (1993). *Talking Data: Transcription and coding in discourse research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ervin-Tripp, S. (1987). 'About, to and by women'. In *Women's Language, Socialization and Self-Image*. D. Brouwer and D. de Haan, eds. Dordrecht: Foris, pp.17–26.
- Esim, S. (1997). 'Can feminist methodology reduce power hierarchies in research settings?'. *Feminist Economics* 3(2): 137–9.
- Fawcett, J.T. (1988). 'The value of children and the transition to parenthood'. *Marriage and the Family Review* 12: 11–34.
- Fienberg, S.E. (1990). 'Comment'. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 85(409): 241–4.



- Firth, R., ed. (1957). *Man and Culture: An evaluation of the work of Bronislaw Malinowski*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Fishbein, M. and I. Ajzen (1975). *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fisher, K. (1997). 'Locating frames in the discursive universe'. *Sociological Research Online* 3(2): <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/2/3/4.html>> (accessed 27 October 1998).
- Fisher, K. (2000). 'Uncertain aims and tacit negotiation: birth control practices in Britain, 1925-50'. *Population and Development Review* 26(2): 295–317.
- Fishman, P.M. (1983). 'The work women do'. In *Language, Gender and Society*. B. Thorne, C. Kramarae and N. Henley, eds. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, pp.89–103.
- Foddy, W. (1993). *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires: Theory and practice in social research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ford, C.E. and S.A. Thompson (1996). 'Interactional units in conversation: syntactic, intonational, and pragmatic resources for the management of turns'. In *Interaction and Grammar*. E. Ochs, E.A. Schegloff and S.A. Thompson, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.134–84.
- Fowler, F.J. and T.W. Mangione (1986). *Reducing Interviewer Effects on Health Survey Data*. Washington, DC: National Center for Health Services Research.
- Fowler, F.J. and T.W. Mangione (1990). *Standardized Survey Interviewing: Minimizing interviewer-related error*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Francisco, A. and J. Pitso (1997). *Misconceptions concerning the African process of marriage: empirical, theoretical and methodological challenges*. Paper presented at African Studies Conference, 25–27 September, The Australian National University, Canberra.
- Frankel, R. (1990). 'Talking in interviews: a dispreference for patient-initiated questions in physician-patient encounters'. In *Interaction Competence*. G. Psathas, ed. Washington, DC: International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis, University Press of America, pp.231–62.
- Frankel, R.M. (1984a). 'From sentence to sequence: understanding the medical encounter through microinteractional analysis'. *Discourse Processes* 7: 135–70.
- Frankel, R.M. (1984b). 'Physicians and patients in social interaction: medical encounters as a discourse process. Editor's Introduction'. *Discourse Processes* 7: 103–5.

- Freed, A. (1996). 'Language of pregnancy: women and medical experiences'. In *Gender and Belief Systems: Proceedings of the Fourth Berkeley Women and Language Conference*. N. Warner et al., eds. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Women and Language Group, pp.237–45.
- Freedman, R., P.K. Whelpton and A.A. Campbell (1959). *Family Planning, Sterility and Population Growth*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Frey, J.H. (1983). *Survey Research by Telephone*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Frey, J.H. and S.M. Oishi (1995). *How to Conduct Interviews by Telephone and in Person*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fulton, D. and S. Randall (1988). 'Households, women's roles and prestige as factors determining nuptiality and fertility differentials in Mali'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.191–211.
- Gardner, R. (1994). 'Conversation analysis transcription'. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics Series S 11*: 185–91.
- Gardner, R. (1997). 'The conversational object Mm: a weak and variable acknowledging token'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 30(2): 131–56.
- Gardner, R. (1999). *Right: a response token for making connections*. Paper presented at Conference of the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, September, Perth, Western Australia.
- Geertz, C. (1983). *Local Knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geertz, C. (1995). *After the Fact: Two countries, four decades, one anthropologist*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gerhardt, J. and S. Beyerle (1997). 'What if Socrates had been a woman? The therapist's use of acknowledgement tokens (mm-hm, yeah, sure, right...) as a nonreflective means of intersubjective involvement'. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 33(3): 367–410.
- Giles, H. and R.N. St. Clair (1985). *Recent Advances in Language, Communication, and Social Psychology*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

- Glaser, B.G. and A.L. Strauss (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Glenn, P.J. (1995). 'Laughing *at* and laughing *with*: negotiation of participant alignments through conversational laughter'. In *Situated Order: Studies in the social organization of talk and embodied activities*. P. ten Have and G. Psathas, eds. Washington DC: International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis and University Press of America, pp.43–56.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Goffman, E. (1983). 'The interaction order'. *American Sociological Review* 48(1): 1–17.
- Gonzalez, A. (1995). 'The cultural content in English as an International Auxiliary Language (EIAL): problems and issues'. In *Language and Culture in Multilingual Societies: Viewpoints and visions*. M.L. Tickoo, ed. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, pp.54–63.
- Goodwin, C. (1979). 'The interactive construction of a sentence in natural conversation'. In *Everyday Language: Studies in ethnomethodology*. G. Psathas, ed. New York: Irvington Publishers, pp.97–122.
- Goodwin, C. (1981). *Conversational Organization: Interaction between speakers and hearers*. New York: Academic Press.
- Goodwin, C. (1984). 'Notes on story structure and the organization of participation'. In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversational analysis*. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.225–46.
- Goodwin, C. and M.H. Goodwin (1992). 'Assessments and the construction of context'. In *Rethinking Context*. A. Duranti and C. Goodwin, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.147–89.
- Goodwin, C. and J. Heritage (1990). 'Conversation analysis'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19: 283–307.
- Goodwin, M.H. (1990). *He-said-she-said: talk as social organization among black children*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Goodwin, M.H. and C. Goodwin (1986). 'Gesture and co-participation in the activity of searching for a word'. *Semiotica* 62: 51–75.
- Goody, E.N., ed. (1978). *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in social interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Gorden, R.L. (1969). *Interviewing: Strategy, techniques, and tactics*. Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press.
- Govindasamy, P. and M. Vaessen (1997). *Informed respondent approach to data collection: an experimental study in Nepal*. DHS Working Papers No. 22. Calverton, Maryland: Macro International.
- Graham, N.Z. (1997). 'Attitudes toward women, work and family'. *Canadian Social Trends* (Autumn): 13–7.
- Greatbatch, D. (1992). 'On the management of disagreement between news interviewees'. In *Talk at Work: Interaction in institutional settings*. P. Drew and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.268–301.
- Greenhalgh, S. (1990). 'Toward a political economy of fertility: anthropological contributions'. *Population and Development Review* 16(1): 85–106.
- Greenhalgh, S. (1995). *Situating Fertility: Anthropology and demographic inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Greenhalgh, S. (1996). 'The social construction of population science: an intellectual, institutional and political history of twentieth-century demography'. *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 38(1): 26–66.
- Grice, H.P. (1971). 'Meaning'. In *Semantics: An Interdisciplinary Reader in Philosophy, Linguistics and Psychology*. D.D. Steinberg and L.A. Jakobovits, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.53–60.
- Grice, H.P. (1975). 'Logic and Conversation'. In *Syntax and Semantics Vol. 3: Speech Acts*. P. Cole and J. Morgan, eds. New York: Academic Press.
- Grice, H.P. (1989). *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Groves, R.M. (1989). *Survey Error and Survey Costs*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Groves, R.M., P.P. Biemer, L.E. Lyberg, J.T. Massey, W.L. Nicholls and J. Waksberg, eds. (1988). *Telephone Survey Methodology*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Guérin-Pace, F. and A. Blum (2000). 'The comparative illusion: the International Adult Literacy Survey'. *Population: An English Selection* 12: 215–46.
- Gumperz, J.J. (1982). *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J.J. (1992). 'Interviewing in intercultural situations'. In *Talk at Work: Interaction in institutional settings*. P. Drew and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.302–27.

- Guthrie, A.M. (1997). 'On the systematic deployment of okay and mmhmm in academic advising sessions'. *Pragmatics* 7(3): 397–415.
- Hagenaars, J.A. and T.G. Heinen (1982). 'Effects of role-independent interviewer characteristics on responses'. In *Response Behaviour in the Survey-Interview*. W. Dijkstra and J. van der Zouwen, eds. London: Academic Press, pp.91–130.
- Hahn, R.A. (1990). 'Comment'. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 85(409): 244–6.
- Hakim, C. (2001). 'Taking women seriously'. *People and Place* 9(4): 1–6.
- Hallpike, C.R. (1971). 'Some problems in cross-cultural comparison'. In *The Translation of Culture: Essays to E.E.Evans-Pritchard*. T.O.Beidelman, ed. London: Tavistock, pp.123–40.
- Hammel, E.A. (1990). 'A theory of culture for demography'. *Population and Development Review* 16(3): 455–85.
- Harding, S., ed. (1987). *Feminism and Methodology: Social science issues*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Harvey, P. (1992). 'Bilingualism in the Peruvian Andes'. In *Researching Language: Issues of power and method*. D. Cameron, E. Frazer, P. Harvey *et al.*, eds. London: Routledge, pp.65–89.
- Hastie, R. (1987). 'Information processing theory for the survey researcher'. In *Social Information Processing and Survey Methodology*. H.-J. Hippler, N. Schwarz and S. Sudman, eds. New York: Springer-Verlag, pp.42–0.
- Hastings, A. (1998). 'Connecting linguistic structures and social practices: a discursive approach to social policy analysis'. *Journal of Social Policy* 27(2): 191–211.
- Hauser, P.M. and O.D. Duncan, eds. (1959). *The Study of Population: An inventory and appraisal*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hayashi, R. and T. Hayashi (1995). 'Power of English loanwords in Japanese discourse'. In *Language and Culture in Multilingual Societies: Viewpoints and visions*. M.L. Tickoo, ed. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, pp.194–208.
- Hayes, A. (1994). *The Role of Culture in Demographic Analysis: A preliminary investigation*. Working Papers in Demography 46. Canberra: Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University.
- Headland, T.N., K. L.Pike and M. Harris, eds. (1990). *Emics and Etics: The insider/outsider debate*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

- Heath, C. (1986). *Body Movement and Speech in Medical Interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heath, C. (1992). 'The delivery and reception of diagnosis in the general practice consultation'. In *Talk at Work: Interaction in institutional settings*. P. Drew and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.235–67.
- Heritage, J. (1984a). 'A change-of-state-token and aspects of its sequential placement'. In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversation analysis*. J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.299–345.
- Heritage, J. (1984b). *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Heritage, J. (1985). 'Analyzing news interviews: aspects of the production of talk for an overhearing audience'. In *Handbook of Discourse Analysis Vol. 3: Discourse and Dialogue*. T.A. van Dijk, ed. London: Academic Press, pp.95–117.
- Heritage, J. (1988). 'Explanations as accounts: a conversation analytic perspective'. In *Analyzing Everyday Explanation: A casebook of methods*. C. Antaki, ed. London: Sage, pp.127–44.
- Heritage, J. (1994). 'Constituting and maintaining activities across sequences: *And*-prefacing as a feature of question design'. *Language in Society* 23: 1–29.
- Heritage, J. and D. Greatbatch (1991). 'On the institutional character of institutional talk: the case of news interviews'. In *Talk and Social Structure: Studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis*. D. Boden and D.H. Zimmerman, eds. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp.97–137.
- Heritage, J.C. and D.R. Watson (1979). 'Formulations as conversational objects'. In *Everyday Language: Studies in ethnomethodology*. G. Psathas, ed. New York: Irvington, pp.123–63.
- Hermalin, A.I. and X. Lui (1990). 'Gauging the validity of responses to questions on family size preferences in China'. *Population and Development Review* 16(2): 337–54.
- Hippler, H.-J. and N. Schwarz (1987). 'Response effects in surveys'. In *Social Information Processing and Survey Methodology*. H.-J. Hippler, N. Schwarz and S. Sudman, eds. New York: Springer-Verlag, pp.102–22.
- Hippler, H.-J., N. Schwarz and S. Sudman, eds. (1987). *Social Information Processing and Survey Methodology*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

- Hoffman, L.W. and M.L. Hoffman (1973). 'The value of children to parents'. In *Psychological Perspectives on Population*. J.T. Fawcett, ed. New York: Basic Books, pp.19–76.
- Holstein, J.A. and J.F. Gubrium (1995). *The Active Interview*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Holzknicht, S. (1987). 'Why is smoke not a smoke? Language taboo and problems of elicitation in the languages of the Markham family'. In *A World of Language: Papers presented to Professor S.A. Wurm on his 65th birthday*. D. Laycock and W. Winter, eds. Pacific Linguistics C-100, pp.257–63.
- Hopper, R. (1992). *Telephone Conversation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. (1995). 'Meeting both ends: between standardization and recipient design in telephone survey interviews'. In *Situated Order: Studies in the social organization of talk and embodied activities*. P. ten Have and G. Psathas, eds. Washington, DC: International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis, and University Press of America, pp.91–106.
- Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. (1996). 'Probing behaviour of interviewers in the standardised semi-open research interview'. *Quality and Quantity* 30: 205–30.
- Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. (1997a). 'Being friendly in survey interviews'. *Journal of Pragmatics* 28: 591–623.
- Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. (1997b). *The interactional function of soft talk in research interviews*. Paper presented at Fifth Cognitive Linguistics Conference, 14–19 July, Amsterdam.
- Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. (1999). *The analysis of (semi)structured interviews: turn construction and turn taking*. Paper presented at Murdoch Symposium on Talk-in-Interaction, 23–4 September, Perth, Western Australia.
- Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. (2000). *Interaction and the Standardized Survey Interview: The living questionnaire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. (2002). 'Questioning turn format and turn-taking problems in standardized interviews'. In *Standardization and Tacit Knowledge: Interaction and practice in the survey interview*. D.W. Maynard, H. Houtkoop-Steenstra, N.C. Schaeffer and J. van der Zouwen, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.243–61.

- Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. and C. Antaki (1997). 'Creating happy people by asking yes-no questions'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 30(4): 285–313.
- Houtkoop-Steenstra, H. and H. van den Bergh (2000). 'Effects of introductions in large-scale telephone survey interviews'. *Sociological Methods and Research* 28(3): 281–300.
- Hugo, G. (1988). 'Micro-approaches to the study of population movement: an Indonesian case study'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.376–95.
- Hull, T.H. (2001). 'Book Review: *Contraception across Cultures: Technology, Choices, Constraints*. 2000. Eds. Andrew Russell, Elisa S. Sobó and Mary S. Thompson. Oxford: Berg'. *Population Studies* 55(2): 205–6.
- Hull, T.H., V.J. Hull and M. Singarimbun (1988). 'Combining research techniques in the study of fertility and family planning in Java: theory and practice'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.56–73.
- Hull, T.H., R. Rusman and B. Utomo (1996). *The Rashomon technique in Indonesia: innovations in qualitative data collection*. Paper presented at Population Association of America Annual Meeting, 9–11 May, New Orleans.
- Hutchby, I. (1999). 'Re: [languse] transcribing digitised recordings'. E-mail to Languse list (6 June) .
- Institute for Resource Development and Westinghouse Electric Corporation (1987a). *Model A Questionnaire with Commentary for High Contraceptive Prevalence Countries*. DHS Basic Documentation Phase II. Columbia, Maryland.
- Institute for Resource Development and Westinghouse Electric Corporation (1987b). *Model B Questionnaire with Commentary for Low Contraceptive Prevalence Countries*. DHS Basic Documentation Phase II. Columbia, Maryland.
- Institute for Resource Development and Macro Systems, I. (1990a). *Model A Questionnaire with Commentary for High Contraceptive Prevalence Countries*. DHS Basic Documentation Phase II. Columbia, Maryland.
- Institute for Resource Development and Macro Systems, I. (1990b). *Model B Questionnaire with Commentary for Low Contraceptive Prevalence Countries*. DHS Basic Documentation Phase II. Columbia, Maryland.



- Institute for Social Research (1976). *Interviewer's Manual*. Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan.
- International Social Science Surveys Australia (ISSA) (1994). *Family and the Environment*. Canberra: National Social Science Survey, Research School of Social Sciences, ANUTech, The Australian National University.
- International Social Survey Program (ISSP) (2001). 'Fielding of ISSP modules: fielding and archiving update, May 2001'. <<http://www.issp.org/fielding.htm>> (accessed 21 August 2001).
- Iskandar, M.B., B. Utomo, T.H. Hull, N.G. Dharmaputra and Y. Azwar (1996). *Unraveling the Mysteries of Maternal Death in West Java: Reexamining the witnesses*. Depok, Jakarta: Centre for Health Research, Research Institute, University of Indonesia.
- Jefferson, G. (1974). 'Error correction as an interactional resource'. *Language in Society* 3(3): 181–99.
- Jefferson, G. (1979). 'A technique for inviting laughter and its subsequent acceptance declination'. In *Everyday Language: Studies in ethnomethodology*. G. Psathas, ed. New York: Irvington, pp.79–96.
- Jefferson, G. (1984a). 'Notes on a systematic deployment of the acknowledgement tokens "yeah" and "mm hm" '. *Papers in Linguistics* 17: 197–206.
- Jefferson, G. (1984b). 'On stepwise transition from talk about a trouble to inappropriately next-positioned matters'. In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversation analysis*. J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.191–222.
- Jefferson, G. (1984c). 'On the organization of laughter in talk about troubles'. In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversation analysis*. J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.346–69.
- Jefferson, G. (1988). 'On the sequential organization of troubles talk in ordinary conversation'. *Social Problems* 35(4): 418–41.
- Jefferson, G. (1989). 'Preliminary notes on a possible metric which provides for a "standard maximum" silence of approximately one second in conversation'. In *Conversation: An interdisciplinary perspective*. D. Roger and P. Bull, eds. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp.156–97.

- Jefferson, G., H. Sacks and E. Schegloff (1987). 'Notes on laughter in the pursuit of intimacy'. In *Talk and Social Organisation*. G. Button and J.R.E. Lee, eds. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters, pp.152–205.
- Jemai, H. and S. Singh (1987). 'Question design for demographic events'. In *The World Fertility Survey: An assessment*. J. Cleland and C. Scott, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.129–72.
- Jobe, J.B. and D.J. Mingay (1991). 'Cognitive survey measurement: history and overview'. *Applied Cognitive Psychology Special Issue* 5(3): 175–92.
- Jones, R.K. and A. Brayfield (1997). 'Life's greatest joy?: European attitudes toward the centrality of children'. *Social Forces* 75(4): 1239–70.
- Kahn, R.L. and C.F. Cannell (1957). *The Dynamics of Interviewing: Theory, technique, and cases*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Kahn, R.L. and C.F. Cannell (1964). *The Dynamics of Interviewing*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Kamuzora, C.L. (1989). 'In-depth interview approaches to demographic data collection'. *Proceedings of International Population Conference, Vol. 2*. New Delhi: IUSSP, pp.17–32.
- Keats, D.M. (2000). *Interviewing: A practical guide for students and professionals*. Sydney: UNSW Press.
- Kertzer, D.I. (1997). 'Qualitative and quantitative approaches to historical demography'. *Population and Development Review* 23(4): 839–46.
- Khoo, S.-E. and P. McDonald (1988). 'Ex-nuptial births and unmarried cohabitation in Australia'. *Journal of the Australian Population Association* 5(2): 164–77.
- Kim, M. (1997). 'Poor women survey poor women: feminist perspectives in survey research'. *Feminist Economics* 3(2): 99–117.
- Kippen, R. and P. McDonald (1998). 'Achieving population targets for Australia: an analysis of the options'. *People and Place* 6(2): 11–23.
- Knapp, K., W. Enninger and A. Knapp-Potthoff, eds. (1987). *Analyzing Intercultural Communication*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Knodel, J. (1997). 'A case for nonanthropological qualitative methods for demographers'. *Population and Development Review* 23(4): 847–53.
- Knodel, J., A. Pramualratana and N. Havanon (1988). 'Focus-group research on fertility decline in Thailand: methodology and findings'. In *Micro-Approaches to*

- Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.41–55.
- Komter, M. (1991). *Conflict and Cooperation in Job Interviews: A study of talk, tasks, and ideas*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Publishing.
- Komter, M. (1998). *Dilemmas in the Courtroom: A study of trials of violent crime in the Netherlands*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kovar, M.G. and P. Royston (1990). 'Comment'. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 85(409): 246–7.
- Krasnick, H. (1995). 'The role of linguaculture and intercultural communication in ASEAN in the year 2020: prospects and predictions'. In *Language and Culture in Multilingual Societies: Viewpoints and Visions*. M.L. Tickoo, ed. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, pp.81–94.
- Krysan, M. (1999). 'Qualifying a quantifying analysis on racial equality'. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 26(2): 211–8.
- Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the black English vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Lavin, D. and D.W. Maynard (2002). 'Standardization and rapport: how interviewers handle the laughter of respondents during telephone surveys'. In *Standardization and Tacit Knowledge: Interaction and practice in the survey interview*. D.W. Maynard, H. Houtkoop-Steenstra, N.C. Schaeffer and J. van der Zouwen, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.335–65.
- Lesthaeghe, R. and P. Willems (1999). 'Is low fertility a temporary phenomenon in the European Union?'. *Population and Development Review* 25(2): 211–28.
- Levelt, W.J.M. (1989). *Speaking: From intention to articulation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Liao, T.F. (1996). 'Introduction to the special issue on demography'. *Sociological Quarterly* 37(1): 17–8.
- Liddicoat, A. (2002). *Talk-in-interaction: Analysing everyday conversation*. Brisbane: School of Languages and Linguistics, Griffith University.
- Liddicoat, A., A. Brown, S. Döpke and K. Love (1992). 'The effect of institution: openings in talkback radio'. *Text* 12(4): 541–62.

- Lindsay, J. (1996). *Coupling up: a study of heterosexual cohabitation*. PhD thesis. Bundoora, Victoria: School of Sociology and Anthropology, La Trobe University.
- London, K., L. Petersen and L. Piccinino (1995). 'The National Survey of Family Growth: principal source of statistics on unintended pregnancy'. In *The Best Intentions: Unintended pregnancy and the well-being of children and families*. S.S. Brown and L. Eisenberg, eds. Washington DC: National Academy Press, pp.286–95.
- Lucas, D. and P. Kane, eds. (1985). *Asking Demographic Questions*. Demography Teaching Notes 5. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, The Australian National University.
- Lucas, D. and H. Ware (1977). 'Language differences and the family planning survey'. *Studies in Family Planning* 8(9): 233–36.
- MacCormack, C.P. (1988). 'Lay concepts of reproductive physiology related to contraceptive use: a method of investigation'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.441–8.
- Macro International Inc. (1995a). *Model A Questionnaire with Commentary for High Contraceptive Prevalence Countries*. DHS-III Basic Documentation No. 1. Calverton, Maryland.
- Macro International Inc. (1995b). *Model B Questionnaire with Commentary for Low Contraceptive Prevalence Countries*. DHS-III Basic Documentation No. 2. Calverton, Maryland.
- Macro International Inc. (1997a). *Interviewer's Manual for Use with Model A Questionnaire for High Contraceptive Prevalence Countries*. DHS-III Basic Documentation No. 3. Calverton, Maryland.
- Macro International Inc. (1997b). *Supervisor's and Editor's Manual for Use with Model A and B Questionnaires*. DHS-III Basic Documentation No. 5. Calverton, Maryland.
- Malinowski, B. (1944). *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Malinowski, B. (1948). *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press.

- Maternowska, M.C. (2000). 'A clinic in conflict: a political economy case study of family planning in Haiti'. In *Contraception Across Cultures: Technology, choices, constraints*. A. Russell, E.J. Sobo and M.S. Thompson, eds. New York: Oxford, pp.103–26.
- Maynard, D., H. Houtkoop-Steenstra, N.C. Schaeffer and J. van der Zouwen, eds. (2002). *Standardization and Tacit Knowledge: Interaction and practice in the survey interview*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Maynard, D. and N.C. Schaeffer (1997). 'Keeping the gate'. *Sociological Methods and Research* 26(1): 34–79.
- Maynard, D. and N.C. Schaeffer (2002). 'Standardization and its discontents'. In *Standardization and Tacit Knowledge: Interaction and practice in the survey interview*. D. Maynard, H. Houtkoop-Steenstra, N.C. Schaeffer and J. van der Zouwen, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.3–45.
- Maynard, D.W. (1984). *Inside Plea Bargaining: The language of negotiation*. New York: Plenum.
- Mazeland, H. and P. ten Have (1998). 'Essential tensions in (semi-)open research interviews'. <<http://www.pscw.uva.nl/emca/ET.htm>> (accessed 21 October, 1998).
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The Long Interview*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- McDaniel, S.A. (1996). 'Toward a synthesis of feminist and demographic perspectives on fertility'. *Sociological Quarterly* 37(1): 83–104.
- McDonald, P. (1985). 'Nuptiality'. In *Asking Demographic Questions*. D. Lucas and P. Kane, eds. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, The Australian National University, pp.69–86.
- McDonald, P. (1998). 'Contemporary fertility patterns in Australia: first data from the 1996 census'. *People and Place* 6(1): 1–13.
- McDonald, P. (2000a). 'Gender equity, social institutions and the future of fertility'. *Journal of Population Research* 17(1): 1–16.
- McDonald, P. (2000b). *The "toolbox" of public policies to impact on fertility—a global view*. Paper presented at Annual Seminar 2000 of the European Observatory on Family Matters, Low Fertility, Families and Public Policies, 15–6 September, Sevilla, Spain.
- McGuinness, P.P. (2000). 'To breed or not to breed—that is the question.' *Sydney Morning Herald* (Saturday 17 June): 37.

- McGuire, W.J. (1985). 'Attitudes and attitude change'. In *The Handbook of Social Psychology Vol. 2: Special Fields and Applications*. G. Lindzey and E. Aronson, eds. New York: Random House, pp.233–346.
- McHoul, A. (1978). 'The organization of turns at formal talk in the classroom'. *Language in Society* 7: 183–213.
- McNicoll, G. (1988). 'On the local context of demographic change'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.10–24.
- McNicoll, G. (1992). 'The agenda of population studies: a commentary and complaint'. *Population and Development Review* 18(3): 399–420.
- McNicoll, G. (1998). *Government and Fertility in Transitional and Post-transitional Societies*. Policy Research Division Working Papers No. 113. New York: Population Council.
- McRobbie, A. and J. Jupp (1993). *Implementation Strategy of the Report to the Commonwealth State Council on Non-English-Speaking Background Women's Issues on Women and Language Services: How can we tell you? how will we know?* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Meehan, A.J. (1989). 'Assessing the "police-worthiness" of citizens' complaints to the police: accountability and the negotiation of "facts" '. In *The Interactional Order: New directions and the study of social order*. D.T. Helm, W.T. Anderson, A.J. Meehan and A.W. Rawls, eds. New York: Irvington, pp.116–40.
- Meekers, D. (1992). 'The process of marriage in African societies: a multiple approach indicator'. *Population and Development Review* 18(1): 61–78.
- Mehan, H. (1979). *Learning Lessons: Social organization in the classroom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mehan, H. (1985). 'The structure of classroom discourse'. In *Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Vol. 3: Discourse and Dialogue*. T.A. van Dijk, ed. London: Academic Press, pp.119–31.
- Mehan, H. and H. Wood (1975). *The Reality of Ethnomethodology*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Melbourne Survey Group (1979). *Melbourne Survey 1977: Vol. 2 Recently Married 516 Females*. Canberra: Department of Demography, Australian National University.

- Minnesota Public Radio (1999). 'The Fertility Race: American attitudes on children and family'. <[http://www.americanradioworks.org/features/fertility\\_race/common/attitudes.shtml](http://www.americanradioworks.org/features/fertility_race/common/attitudes.shtml)> (accessed 4 September 2001).
- Misiti, M. (2001). 'Methods and applications. Wording population: an experience with textual analysis'. *Demotrends* 2: 6.
- Moerman, M. (1988). *Talking Culture: Ethnography and conversation analysis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Moghaddam, F.M. (1998). *Social Psychology: Exploring universals across cultures*. New York: W. H. Freeman.
- Molenaar, N.J. and J.H. Smit (1996). 'Asking and answering yes/no-questions in survey interviews: a conversational approach'. *Quality and Quantity* 30: 115–36.
- Moore, R.J. (1999a). Achieving understanding in the standardized interview: a conversation analytic study of talk in telephone surveys. PhD dissertation. Bloomington, Indiana: Department of Sociology, University of Indiana.
- Moore, R.J. (1999b). 'Re:[languse] transcribing digitised recordings'. E-mail to Languse list (9 June).
- Morrison, D.M. (1989). 'Predicting contraceptive efficacy: a discriminant analysis of three groups of adolescent women'. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 19: 1431–52.
- Morton-Williams, J. and W. Sykes (1984). 'The use of interaction coding and follow-up interviews to investigate comprehension of survey questions'. *Journal of the Market Research Society* 26(2): 109–27.
- Nag, M. and N. Kak (1988). 'Demographic transition in a Punjab village'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.242–60.
- Nevile, M. (2001). Beyond the black box: talk in interaction in the airline cockpit. PhD thesis. Canberra: School of Language Studies, The Australian National University.
- Nicholls, W.L. (1988). 'Computer-assisted telephone interviewing: a general introduction'. In *Telephone Survey Methodology*. R.M. Groves, P.P. Biemer, L.E. Lyberg *et al.*, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.377–85.
- Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (1998). 'Module: gender and family roles'. <<http://www.qub.ac.uk/nilt/gender.html>> (accessed 3 September 2001).

- O'Sullivan, K. (1994). *Understanding Ways: Communicating between cultures*. Sydney: Hale and Iremonger.
- Oakley, A. (1979). *From Here to Maternity*. London: Penguin Books.
- Oakley, A. (1981). 'Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms'. In *Doing Feminist Research*. H. Roberts, ed. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp.30–61.
- Obermeyer, C.M. (1997). 'Qualitative methods: a key to a better understanding of demographic behavior?'. *Population and Development Review* 23(4): 813–8.
- O'Donnell-Trujillo, N. and K. Adams (1983). 'Heheh in conversation: some coordinating accomplishments of laughter'. *Western Journal of Communication* 47: 175–91.
- Office of the Status of Women (1999). *Women in Australia 1999*. Canberra.
- Olmsted, J.C. (1997). 'Telling Palestinian women's stories'. *Feminist Economics* 3(2): 141–51.
- Oppenheim, A.N. (1966). *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement*. London: Heinemann.
- Oppenheim, A.N. (1992). *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing, and Attitude Measurement*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Oskamp, S. (1991). *Attitudes and Opinions*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Payne, S.L. (1951). *The Art of Asking Questions*. Princeton: Princetown University Press.
- Peil, M. and D. Lucas (1972). *Survey Research Methods for West Africa: A student handbook*. Lagos: Human Resources Unit, Lagos University.
- Penny, D.H. and M. Singarimbun (1973). *Population and Poverty in Rural Java: Some economic arithmetic from Sriharjo*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Peräkylä, A. (1995). *AIDS Counselling: Institutional interaction and clinical practice*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Personal Narratives Group (1989). *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist theory and personal narratives*. Bloomington: Indiana Press.
- Petersen, E. (1987). 'The stories of pregnancy: on interpretation of small-group cultures'. *Communication Quarterly* 35(1): 39–47.
- Phillips, B.S. (1971). *Social Research: Strategy and tactics*. New York: Macmillan.
- Pison, G. and A. Langaney (1988). 'Age patterns of mortality in Eastern Senegal: a comparison of micro and survey approaches'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.297–317.



- Pitso, J. (1997). Marriage and non-marital child-bearing in Botswana: The case of Thamaga village. PhD thesis. Canberra: Graduate Program in Demography, The Australian National University.
- Pollner, M. (1979). 'Explicative transactions: making and managing meaning in traffic court'. In *Everyday Language: Studies in ethnomethodology*. G. Psathas, ed. New York: Irvington, pp.227–53.
- Pomerantz, A. (1984a). 'Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes'. In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversation analysis*. J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.57–101.
- Pomerantz, A. (1984b). 'Pursuing a response'. In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversation analysis*. J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.152–63.
- Population Council (2000). 'Education and fertility: language identity may outweigh nationality in Bengal'. <[http://www.popcouncil.org/publications/popbriefs/pb6\(4\)5.html](http://www.popcouncil.org/publications/popbriefs/pb6(4)5.html)> *Population Briefs* 6(4) (accessed 3 January 2002).
- Pressat, R. (1972). *Demographic Analysis: Methods, results, applications*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.
- Presser, H.B. (1997). 'Demography, feminism, and the science-policy nexus'. *Population and Development Review* 23(2): 295–331.
- Pritchard, C.R. (1993). 'Supportive devices in language and paralinguistics in the achievement of affiliation in troubles talk'. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 16(1): 57–70.
- Psathas, G., ed. (1979). *Everyday Language: Studies in ethnomethodology*. New York: Irvington.
- Psathas, G. (1995). *Conversation Analysis: The study of talk in interaction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Psathas, G. and T. Anderson (1990). 'The "practices" of transcription in conversation analysis'. *Semiotica* 78(1–2): 75–99.
- Randall, S.C. (1988). *Use of ethnographical knowledge in the collection of demographic data*. African Population Conference/Congrès Africain de Population, 7–12 November 1988, Dakar, Senegal, Liège: IUSSP.
- Rendle-Short, J. (1998). Discourse markers in computer science seminar talk. MA thesis. Canberra: Department of Linguistics, The Australian National University.

- Rendle-Short, J. (1999). 'When "okay" is okay in computer science seminar talk'. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 22(2): 19–33.
- Rendle-Short, J. (2002). Talk and action in the computer science seminar. PhD thesis. Canberra: Department of Linguistics, The Australian National University.
- Renne, E.P. (1994). *An Anthropological Approach to Fertility Change*. Working Papers in Demography No. 48. Canberra: Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University.
- Research School of Social Sciences (RSSS) (1998). 'Demography at the Australian National University: Demography Home Page'. <<http://coombs.anu.edu.au/Depts/RSSS/Demography/demography-at-anu>> (accessed 29 April): 1–3.
- Richards, L. (1978). *Having Families: Marriage, parenthood and social pressure in Australia*. London: Penguin.
- Roberts, H., ed. (1981). *Doing Feminist Research*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Robinson, P. (1984). 'Language in data collection: difficulties with diversity'. *Journal of the Market Research Society* 26(2): 159–69.
- Ross, B.M. (1991). *Remembering the Personal Past: Descriptions of autobiographical memory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ross, D.A. and J.P. Vaughan (1984). *Health Interview Surveys in Developing Countries: A methodological review with recommendations for future surveys*. London: Evaluation and Planning Centre for Health Care, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.
- Russell, A., E.J. Sobo and M.S. Thompson, eds. (2000). *Contraception across Cultures: Technology, choices, constraints*. New York: Oxford.
- Ruzicka, L.T. (1976). 'Fertility decline in Australia—Emerging new strategy of family formation?'. In *Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Demographic Change*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. Canberra: Department of Demography, The Australian National University., pp.1–28.
- Sacks, H. (1972). 'On the analyzability of stories by children'. In *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes, eds. New York: Rinehart and Winston, pp.325–45.
- Sacks, H. (1984a). 'Notes on methodology'. In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversation analysis*. J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.21–7.

- Sacks, H. (1984b). 'On doing "being ordinary" '. In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in conversation analysis*. J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.413–29.
- Sacks, H. (1987). 'On the preference for agreement and contiguity in sequences in conversation'. In *Talk and Social Organisation*. G. Button and J. R. E. Lee, eds. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp.54–69.
- Sacks, H. (1995). *Lectures on Conversation, 2 vols. Ed. G. Jefferson*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sacks, H., E.A. Schegloff and G. Jefferson (1974). 'A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation'. *Language* 50: 696–735.
- Santow, G. (1985). 'Fertility'. In *Asking Demographic Questions*. D. Lucas and P. Kane, eds. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, The Australian National University, pp.87–100.
- Savory, T. (1957). *The Art of Translation*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Schaeffer, N.C. (1991a). 'Conversation with a purpose—or conversation? Interaction in the standardized interview'. In *Measurement Error in Surveys*. P. Biemer, R.M. Groves, L. Lyberg, N. Mathiowetz and S. Sudman, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.367–91.
- Schaeffer, N.C. (1991b). 'Hardly ever or constantly: group comparisons using vague quantifiers'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 55(3): 395–423.
- Schaeffer, N.C. and D.W. Maynard (1996). 'From paradigm to prototype and back again: interactive aspects of "cognitive processing" in standardized survey interviews'. In *Answering Questions: Methodology for determining cognitive and communicative processes in survey research*. N. Schwarz and S. Sudman, eds. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp.65–88.
- Schaeffer, N.C., D.W. Maynard and R. Cradock (1993). *Negotiating uncertainty: uncertainty proposals and their disposal in standardized survey interviews*. Draft paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, St. Petersburg, Florida, May 1992, and at the meeting of the International Sociological Association Research Committee 25 (Sociolinguistics), June 1992, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.
- Schaeffer, N.C. and E. Thomson (1992). 'The discovery of grounded uncertainty: developing standardized questions about strength of fertility motivation'. *Sociological Methodology* 22: 37–82.

- Schegloff, E.A. (1968). 'Sequencing in conversational openings'. *American Anthropologist* 70(6): 1075–95.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1972). 'Notes on a conversational practice: formulating place'. In *Studies in Social Interaction*. D.N. Sudnow, ed. New York: The Free Press, pp.75–119.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1979). 'Identification and recognition in telephone conversation openings'. In *Everyday Language*. G. Psathas, ed. New York: Irvington, pp.23–78.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1980). 'Preliminaries to preliminaries: "Can I ask you a question?"'. *Sociological Inquiry* 50(3–4): 104–52.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1982). 'Discourse as an interactional achievement: some uses of "uh huh" and other things that come between sentences'. In *Analyzing Discourse: Text and talk (Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics)*. D. Tannen, ed. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, pp.71–93.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1986). 'The routine as achievement'. *Human Studies* 9(2–3): 111–51.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1987a). 'Analyzing single episodes of interaction: an exercise in conversation analysis'. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 50(2): 101–14.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1987b). 'Between micro and macro: contexts and other connections'. In *The Micro-Macro Link*. J.C. Alexander, B. Giesen, R. Munch and N.J. Smelser, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.207–34.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1987c). 'Recycled turn beginnings: a precise repair mechanism in conversation's turn-taking organisation'. In *Talk and Social Organisation*. G. Button and J.R.E. Lee, eds. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp.70–85.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1990). 'Comment'. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 85(409): 248–50.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1992a). 'On talk and its institutional occasions'. In *Talk at Work: Interaction in institutional settings*. P. Drew and J. Heritage, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.101–34.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1992b). 'Repair after next turn: the last structurally provided defense of intersubjectivity in conversation'. *American Journal of Sociology* 97(5): 1295–345.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1995). 'Post-expansion'. In *Sequence Organization*. E. Schegloff, ed. Los Angeles: University of California, pp.111–43.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1997). 'Whose text? Whose context?'. *Discourse and Society* 8: 165–87.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1999). "'Schegloff's texts" as "Billig's data": a critical reply'. *Discourse and Society* 10(4): 558–72.

- Schegloff, E.A. (2002). 'Survey interviews as talk-in-interaction'. In *Standardization and Tacit Knowledge: Interaction and practice in the survey interview*. D.W. Maynard, H. Houtkoop-Steenstra, N.C. Schaeffer and J. van der Zouwen, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.151–61.
- Schegloff, E.A., G. Jefferson and H. Sacks (1977). 'The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation'. *Language* 53: 361–82.
- Schegloff, E.A. and H. Sacks (1973). 'Opening up closings'. *Semiotica* 8(4): 289–327.
- Schenkein, J.N. (1972). 'Towards an analysis of natural conversation and the sense of *hebeh*'. *Semiotica* 6: 344–77.
- Schenkein, J.N., ed. (1978). *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction*. New York: Academic Press.
- Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schiffrin, D. (1994). *Approaches to Discourse*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Schober, M.F. and F.G. Conrad (1997). 'Does conversational interviewing reduce survey measurement error?'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 576–602.
- Schober, M.F. and F.G. Conrad (2002). 'A collaborative view of standardized survey interviews'. In *Standardization and Tacit Knowledge: Interaction and practice in the survey interview*. D.W. Maynard, H. Houtkoop-Steenstra, N.C. Schaeffer and J. van der Zouwen, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.67–95.
- Schourup, L. (2001). 'Rethinking *well*'. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33(7): 1025–60.
- Schuman, H. and S. Presser (1981). *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys: Experiments on question form, wording and context*. New York: Academic Press.
- Schwarz, N. and H.-J. Hippler (1987). 'What response options may tell your respondents: informative functions of response alternatives'. In *Social Information Processing and Survey Methodology*. H.-J. Hippler, N. Schwarz and S. Sudman, eds. New York: Springer-Verlag, pp.163–78.
- Schwarz, N. and S. Sudman (1996). *Answering Questions: Methodology for determining cognitive and communicative processes in survey research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Scrimshaw, S.C.M. and E. Hurtado (1987). *Rapid Assessment Procedures for Nutrition and Primary Health Care: Anthropological approaches to improving programme effectiveness*. Los Angeles: The United Nations University, Tokyo, UNICEF and UCLA Latin American Publications, University of California.

- Searle, J.R., ed. (1971). *The Philosophy of Language*. Oxford Readings on Philosophy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seidman, I.E. (1991). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: a guide for interviewers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers' College Press.
- Selting, M. (1998). 'TCUs and TRPs: the construction of units in conversational talk'. *InLiSt No.4 Interaction and Linguistic Structures* <<http://ling.uni-konstanz.de/anglistik/publikationen/inlist/>> (accessed June 2001).
- Selting, M. and E. Couper-Kuhlen, eds. (1996). *Prosody in Conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Silverman, D. (1998). *Harvey Sacks: Social science and conversation analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Singh, S. (1980). *Comparability of Questionnaires*. WFS Comparative Studies Vol. 2 (June). London: World Fertility Survey.
- Singh, S. (1984). *Comparability of Questionnaires: Forty-one WFS countries*. WFS Comparative Studies Vol. 32 (June). London: World Fertility Survey.
- Smit, J.H. (1995). *Suggestieve vragen in survey-interviews: voorkomen, oorzaken en gevolgen*. PhD dissertation. Amsterdam: Faculteit der Sociaal-Culturele Wetenschappen, Vrije Universiteit.
- Smit, J.H., W. Dijkstra and J. van der Zouwen (1997). 'Suggestive interviewer behaviour in surveys: an experimental study'. *Journal of Official Statistics* 13(1): 19–28.
- Smith, T.W. (1984). 'Non-attitudes: a review and evaluation'. In *Surveying Subjective Phenomena, Vol 2*. C.F. Turner and E. Martin, eds. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp.215–55.
- Spender, D. (1980). *Man-Made Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Srinivas, M.N. (1988). 'The use of the method of participant observation in the study of demographic phenomena'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.451–7.
- Steckler, A., K.R. McLeroy, R.M. Goodman, S.T. Bird and L. McCormick (1992). 'Toward integrating qualitative and quantitative methods: an introduction'. *Health Education Quarterly* 19(1): 1–8.
- Stewart, C.J. and W.B. Cash (1991). *Interviewing: Principles and practices*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.

- Stone, L. and J.G. Campbell (1984). 'The use and misuse of surveys in international development: an experiment from Nepal'. *Human Organization* 43(1): 27–37.
- Strack, F. and L. Martin (1987). 'Thinking, judging, and communicating: a process account of context effects in attitude surveys'. In *Social Information Processing and Survey Methodology*. H.-J. Hippler, N. Schwarz and S. Sudman, eds. New York: Springer-Verlag, pp.123–48.
- Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse Analysis: The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Suchman, L. and B. Jordan (1990a). 'Interactional troubles in face-to-face survey interviews'. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 85(409): 232–41.
- Suchman, L. and B. Jordan (1990b). 'Rejoinder'. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 85(409): 252–3.
- Sudman, S. and N.M. Bradburn (1982). *Asking Questions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sudnow, D.N., ed. (1972). *Studies in Social Interaction*. New York: The Free Press.
- Symanski, M.H. (1999). 'Re-engaging and dis-engaging talk in activity'. *Language in Society* 28: 1–23.
- Szreter, S. (1996). *Fertility, Class, and Gender in Britain, 1860-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Men and women in conversation*. Sydney: Random House Australia.
- Tannen, D., ed. (1993a). *Framing in Discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1993b). *Gender and Conversational Interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Teachman, J.D., K. Paasch and K.P. Carver (1993). 'Thirty years of *Demography*'. *Demography* 30(4): 523–32.
- ten Have, P. (1991). 'Talk and institution: a reconsideration of the "asymmetry" of doctor-patient interaction'. In *Talk and Social Structure: Studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis*. D. Boden and D.H. Zimmerman, eds. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp.138–63.
- ten Have, P. (1999). *Doing Conversation Analysis: A practical guide*. London: Sage.
- The Macquarie Dictionary* (1985). Sydney: Macquarie Library.
- Thomson, E. (1997). 'Couple childbearing desires, intentions, and births'. *Demography* 34(3): 343–54.

- Tickoo, M.L., ed. (1995). *Language and Culture in Multilingual Societies: Viewpoints and Visions*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Todd, A.D. (1984). 'The prescription of contraception: negotiations between doctors and patients'. *Discourse Processes* 7: 171–200.
- Tourangeau, R. (1984). 'Cognitive science and survey methods'. In *Cognitive Aspects of Survey Methodology: Building a bridge between disciplines*. T.B. Jabine, M.L. Straf, J.M. Tanur and R. Tourangeau, eds. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, pp.73–100.
- Tourangeau, R. (1987). 'Attitude measurement: a cognitive perspective'. In *Social Information Processing and Survey Methodology*. H.-J. Hippler, N. Schwarz and S. Sudman, eds. New York: Springer-Verlag, pp.149–62.
- Tourangeau, R. (1990). 'Comment'. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 85(409): 250–1.
- Turner, C.F. and E. Martin, eds. (1984). *Surveying Subjective Phenomena, Vols 1 and 2*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Vaessen, M., C. Scott, J. Verrall and S. Coulibaly (1987). 'Translation of questionnaires into local languages'. In *The World Fertility Survey: An assessment*. J. Cleland and C. Scott, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.173–91.
- van de Kaa, D.J. (1998). *Postmodern Fertility Preferences: From changing value orientation to new behaviour*. Working Papers in Demography No. 74. Canberra: Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University.
- van de Walle, F. (1988). 'Birth expectations in Bobo-Dioulasso'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.167–79.
- van der Zouwen, J. (2002). 'Why study interaction in the survey interview? Response from a survey researcher'. In *Standardization and Tacit Knowledge: Interaction and practice in the survey interview*. D. Maynard, H. Houtkoop-Steenstra, N.C. Schaeffer and J. van der Zouwen, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.47–65.
- van der Zouwen, J., W. Dijkstra and J.H. Smit (1991). 'Studying respondent-interviewer interaction: the relationship between interviewing style, interviewer behavior, and response behavior'. In *Measurement Error in Surveys*. R. Biemer, R.M. Groves, L. Lyberg *et al.*, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp.419–37.



- Verbiest, A. (1987). 'Women, speech and presuppositions'. In *Women's Language, Socialization and Self-Image*. D. Brouwer and D. de Haan, eds. Dordrecht: Foris Publications, pp.139–47.
- Vlassof, C. (1988). 'Micro-study of culture and fertility in rural Maharashtra'. In *Micro-Approaches to Demographic Research*. J.C. Caldwell, A.G. Hill and V.J. Hull, eds. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, pp.74–87.
- Wang, K. and D. D'Orio (n.d.). 'Adults' environment and behavior: attitudes toward welfare and working mothers'. *Snapshots of America's Families*  
<<http://www.fww.org/articles/misc/kwang.htm>> (accessed 3 September 2001).
- Ware, H. (1977). *Language Problems in Demographic Fieldwork in Africa: The case of the Cameroon Fertility Survey*. World Fertility Survey Scientific Reports No. 2. Voorburg, The Hague and London: International Statistical Institute and World Fertility Survey.
- Waring, M. (1988). *Counting for Nothing: What men value and what women are worth*. Wellington: Allen and Unwin, Port Nicholson Press.
- Warwick, D. (1982). *Bitter Pills: Population policies and their implementation in eight developing countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Watkins, S.C. (1993). 'If all we knew about women was what we read in *Demography*, what would we know?'. *Demography* 30(4): 551–77.
- Watson, D.R. (1990). 'Some features of the elicitation of confessions in murder interrogations'. In *Interaction Competence*. G. Psathas, ed. Lanham, Md: University Press of America and The International Institute of Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis, pp.263–95.
- Weekend Australian* (2001). 'Work and family: the crunch'. *Weekend Inquirer Special Edition* (1–2 September): 19–30.
- Weiss, K.M. (1976). 'Demographic theory and anthropological inference'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 5: 351–81.
- Weiss, R.S. (1994). *Learning from Strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: The Free Press.
- Wertheimer, R., M. Long and S. Vandivere (2001). 'Welfare recipients' attitudes toward welfare, nonmarital childbearing, and work: implications for reform? New Federalism: National Survey of America's Families. Series B No.B-37 (June)'.  
<[http://newfederalism.urban.org/nsaf/tables/adults\\_d4.htm](http://newfederalism.urban.org/nsaf/tables/adults_d4.htm)> (3 September 2001).

- Whalen, J. (1992). 'Conversation analysis'. In *Encyclopedia of Sociology, Vol. 1*. New York: Macmillan, pp.303–10.
- Williams, L., T. Sobieszczyk and A.E. Perez (2001). 'Consistency between survey and interview data concerning pregnancy wantedness in the Philippines'. *Studies in Family Planning* 32(3): 244–53.
- Willis, M.S. and M. Pratt (2000). 'Psychosocial data and cross-cultural analyses: challenges to anthropology and contraceptive research'. In *Contraception across Cultures: Technology, choices, constraints*. A. Russell, E.J. Sobo and M.S. Thompson, eds. New York: Oxford, pp.27–50.
- Wilson, C. (1999). *On reification in demography*. Paper presented at Workshop on Population Forecasts in the 1920s and 1930s, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, 17–8 May, Rostock, Germany.
- Wilson, T.D. and S.D. Hodges (1992). 'Attitudes as temporary constructions'. In *Construction of Social Judgments*. L.L. Martin and A. Tesser, eds. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.3765.
- Winn, M. and D. Lucas (1993). 'Language, videos and family planning in the South Pacific'. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* 8(4): 1938.
- Wolcott, I. (1990). 'Between tradition and transition: workers with family responsibilities'. *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 25(4): 290300.
- Wolfson, N., T. Marmor and S. Jones (1989). 'Problems in the comparison of speech acts across cultures'. In *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. S. Blum-Kulka, J. House and G. Kasper, eds. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, pp.174–96.
- Young, C. and H. Ware (1978). *Contraceptive use in Australia*. Paper presented at Symposium on Recent Advances in Contraception, Australian Federation of Family Planning Associations, Thredbo, New South Wales.
- Young, C. (1997). 'An update on Australia's future population growth and its population problems'. *People and Place* 5(2): 19–25.

Appendix 1      Pre-call checklist, *Women on Children*  
Survey

---

**PRE-CALL CHECKLIST**

**Name of respondent:**

**ID number/name in my research:**

**Telephone number:**

- ☐ introduced myself as the researcher
  - ☐ gained the co-operation of the respondent and sought her permission for further interviews
  - ☐ told the respondent that her contribution so far in the NLC survey had been appreciated
  - ☐ explained the purpose of my study
  - ☐ provided information on what my survey would require of the respondent, foreshadowed the possibility of an in-depth interview
  - ☐ explained that the telephone interview would be done by someone else
  - ☐ asked permission to audio-tape the telephone interview (and video-tape the in-depth interview if this seems appropriate timing to ask this)
  - ☐ assured the respondent of confidentiality
  - ☐ informed the respondent of her right to end the interview at any time or to refuse to answer questions if she did not want to answer
  - ☐ verified the respondent's contact details and address
- Changes:
- ☐ set up a mutually suitable time for the telephone interview  
Preferred time:
  - ☐ foreshadowed later in-depth interview  
Any preference:
  - ☐ gave the respondent a way of contacting me if she needed to change times or reconsidered her decision
  - ☐ allowed the respondent to ask any questions she might have.

**Notes:**

## Appendix 2 Interview schedule, *Women on Children* Survey

**Name of respondent:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Introduction:**

*Hello, I'm Annie from the Australian Institute of Family Studies. I'm ringing on behalf of the Australian National University which is conducting a study on how Australians manage their work and family lives. Marian May contacted you last week about doing a short telephone interview just on the questions to do with children It should take about 10 minutes. There are about 10 questions altogether, the same questions that you answered in the earlier telephone survey.*

**Q20: Are you married or in a relationship?**  
(Are you living with your partner?)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Not presently in a relationship  | 1 |
| In a relationship with someone but not living with that person               | 2 |
| Living with someone in a relationship but not legally married to that person | 3 |
| Married and living with husband  | 4 |

**Q154: How many children have you ever had?** □□  
(If 0, skip to Q159)

**Q155: Can you tell me their name, sex, month and year of birth?**  
(Eldest first in order of birth)

Ch.	Name	Sex	Month born	Year born	Is this child living with you now?	Are you the biological parent/s of this child?
					Here..... 1 Deceased..... 2 Elsewhere..... 3	Our child (both parents in hhold) 1 My child..... 2 Partner's child..... 3 .Adopted/foster/other... 4
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						



Not sure	3 (skip to Q167)
Unlikely	4
Most unlikely	5
Definitely not	6

**Q166: Why is it unlikely that you will have a child?**  
**Prompt for two reasons      (Any other reason?)**

I'm too old	01
Health reasons	02
I don't have a partner	03
My career would be affected	04
My partner's career would be affected	05
My lifestyle would be affected	06
Children cost too much	07
I don't like children	08
My partner does not like children	09
My partner already has children from a previous relationship	10
No major reason, just think it's unlikely	11
Other (specify)	12

If Q165=(4-6) finish here.

**Q167:(If Q154=0 and Q164=not 1): What will determine when or if you have your first child?**

(If Q154=0 and Q164=1): **What determined the timing of this pregnancy?**

(If Q154=not 0): **What determined the timing of your first child?**

**Prompt for two reasons (Any other reasons?)**

I have to get a partner first	01
Convincing my partner that it's a good idea	02
It will happen when it happens	03
Unplanned, it just happened	04
Failure of contraception/family planning method	05
Wanted a child as soon as possible after marriage	06
Being established in my career	07
My partner being established in their career	08
Having enough money to buy a house	09
Feeling able to cope with the demands of a child	10
My relationship with my partner being well-established	11
After having time to enjoy myself before settling down	12
When I/we feel/felt right about it	13
Feeling financially secure	14
Other (specify)	15

**Q168:** (If Q154=0 and Q164=not 1): **How many children do you think you will have in the future?**

(Else): **How many more children do you think you will have in the future?**

(If Q164=1): **How many more children do you think you will have in the future in addition to the current pregnancy)?**



**Q193:** I'm going to read you some statements about children and I'd like you to tell me whether you **STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE** or **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with each one:

**Q194:** Do you **STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE** OR **STRONGLY DISAGREE?**

1. A life without children is not fully complete

12345
2. Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother

12345
3. Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the father

12345
4. Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy

12345
5. It is better not to have children because they are such a burden

12345
6. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work

12345
7. Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother

12345

Statement number	Strongly agree	Agree	Mixed feelings	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					

**Close:**

*That's the end of the questions. Thanks very much for agreeing to take part in this survey. Marian May will contact you soon to arrange to meet you to talk further on some of these questions. If you have any questions please feel free to contact her on 02 6249 3915 or 02 6248 6674. Thanks again for your help. Goodbye.*

## Appendix 3      Transcription symbols<sup>171</sup>

---

.	a stopping fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence
,	low rise/continuing intonation, not necessarily between clauses of sentences
?	rising inflection, not necessarily a question
¿	rising intonation, weaker than that indicated by a question mark
-	cut-off
=	connecting talk
> <	talk is faster than surrounding talk
< >	talk is slower than surrounding talk
° °	talk that is quieter than surrounding talk
◦ ◦	(subscript) unvoiced/whispered talk
YES	talk that is louder than surrounding talk
* *	creaky voice
# #	sympathetic talk
\$ \$	talk while laughing/smiling
↑↓	marked rising and falling shifts in pitch
(h)	plosive quality
:::	an extension of a sound or syllable
( )	transcription doubt
(( ))	analyst's comments
(1.0)	timed intervals
(.)	a short untimed pause
hh	audible aspirations
·hh	audible inhalations
<u>so</u>	emphasis
[ ]	overlapping utterances or actions

---

<sup>171</sup> Abbreviated from Gardner (1994). Based on Atkinson and Heritage (1984), Jefferson (1984), Schegloff (unpublished paper), Sacks *et al.* (1974).